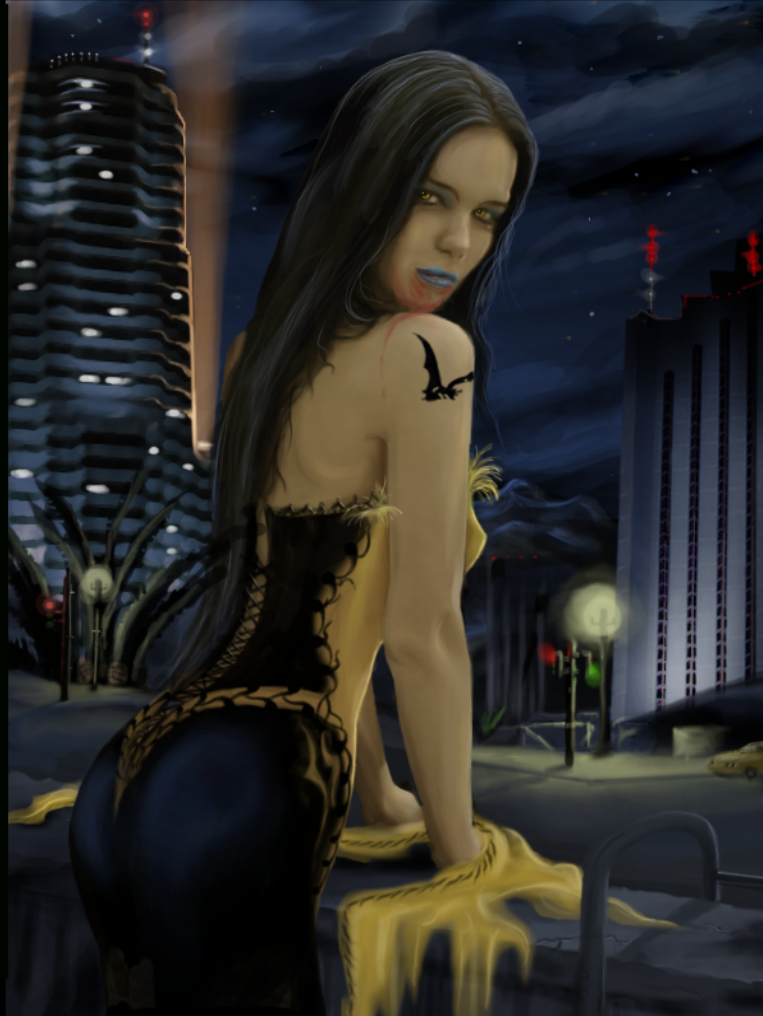


ANOTHER 13 SHADES OF DARKNESS



**by John Polojac and
James Thomson**

M&M
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games*

ANOTHER 13 SHADES OF DARKNESS

by John Polojac

With Additional Material by James Thomson

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Plain Brown Wrapper's latest compendium of super-villainy, *Another 13 Shades of Darkness*. As you may have surmised, this source book is a follow-up to the original *13 Shades*, which detailed (appropriately enough) 13 disturbed, grotesque, or utterly inhuman villains, the monstrous threats that lurk about the fringes of most super-heroic worlds, waiting for the right moment to make grotesque presence known. But this volume of *13 Shades* encompasses a broader scope of villainy than the first; now psychotic quantum powered overmen coexist with extra-dimensional religious zealots and gender-bending Pulp Era masterminds. The one aspect that all the various NPC threats have in common is that in some aspect they are all outside the boundaries—alien, deranged, or simply weird. They are the type of villains that even other super-criminals fear or shun.

Their threat level ranges from minor to cosmic. Some stalk individual human beings for prey, others threaten to bring down entire cities at one time, and a few possess enough malevolent might to shake the foundations of human civilization. Not all are murderous. Some are even light-hearted in tone, though no less odd for that. We list thirteen brand-new villains—six independent threats and one complete team, the *Ordo Ultima*. Each comes with at least two adventure seeds, providing you with quick hooks to tie these villains into your own campaign. There are six longer adventures at the end of the book.

In addition, *Another 13 Shades of Darkness* provides you with four *bonus* villains—a quartet of fearsome adversaries that first appeared in the massive PBW Superlink adventure *Promise of Purgatory* (check it out now, as it's quite good), making a return appearance here due to their connection to the aforementioned Ordo Ultima. And there's even more—we also detail several deadly devices and malevolent spells, instruments of destruction suitable for any warped genius or arch-mastermind.

Even more mind-numbing evil than you could possibly hope to throw at the heroes in your game universe!

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The characters in this book are arranged by PL, from least to most powerful. The independent villains are listed first, followed by the members of the Ordo Ultima. There is no attempt to establish any standard "Campaign World" or setting—there is no Plain Brown Wrapper Universe as such. While some of the characters are written as interacting with or knowing each other, this is done merely for the sake of convenience. Feel free to substitute any already-established villains from your own campaign world if you so wish. Replace Misery with any suitably ghastly undead sorcerer, substitute your own nuclear-fueled maniac for Violator Red if that works better for your game world. These villains are designed so that any or all of them can be used without necessitating large changes to your campaign. Even the true world-beaters such as Professor Purgatory are presented in such a way up so as not to steal the focus of your universe. Instead, *Another 13 Shades of Darkness* is meant to "fill in the edges" that exist around a typical Superlink campaign. It exists to supply game masters with bizarre, off-beat menaces that can provide their players with an interesting change of pace.

In the same mode, this sourcebook does not introduce any new skills, feats, or powers, nor does it draw on any rules from material outside the core rulebook. None of the characters make use of any variant rules, even those introduced in other official M&M material. Our feeling is that it would be unfair to do so, as not everyone has access to these sources. At the same time, you as GM have carte blanche to alter/revise any of the game mechanics or statistics that follow to better fit your own style. Enjoy!

SOLO VILLAINS

Mary Blood



Quote: *"You'd look great wearing YOUR BLOOD! Come to think of it, so would I."*

PL: 9

Real Identity: Mary Blood

Dual Identity: None

Group Affiliation: None—yet (see below)

Nationality: American

Height: 5'10"

Weight: 125 lbs

Hair Color: Brunette

Eye Color: Red

Age: 20

Str: 22 (+6) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** -- (n/a)

Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 20 (+5) **Cha:** 22 (+6)

Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 9

Defense: 10 **Toughness Save:** 8

Impervious Fortitude Save: n/a

Reflexes Save: 8 **Willpower Save:** 9

Skills: Bluff 11 (+16), Diplomacy 10 (+15), Gather Information 4 (+10), Intimidate 8 (+14), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 3 (+4), Knowledge (Popular Culture) 4 (+5), Notice 8 (+13), Perform (Dance) 11 (+15), Sense Motive 6 (+11), Stealth 8 (+11)

Feats: Attractive, Distract (linked to Bluff), Fascinate (Linked to Bluff), Hide in Plain Sight, Sneak Attack 2, Startle

Powers: Drain Constitution 2, Immunity 30 (Immune to all Fortitude effects), Insubstantial 2 (Assume Gaseous Form), Protection 8 (Extras: Impervious; Flaw: Limited [vs. holy symbols, silver, or magical weapons. A "Holy Symbol" is hereby defined as any symbol sacred to the bearer, and not consecrated to the gods of death—a pentagram would work if wielded by a Satanist or Neopagan, as would a hammer and sickle if wielded by a devout Stalinist, but a skull and crossbones in the hands of a necromancer would not], Mind Control 9 (Extras: Conscious, Mental Link), Regeneration 5 (Resurrection; Flaw: Limited [Does not work if she has been beheaded or impaled with a wooden stake]), Super-Movement 1 (Wall-Crawling), Super-Senses 3 (Darkvision, Acute Hearing)

Drawbacks: Weakness (dependant on blood, common, minor, -2pts.), Weakness (holy symbols, dazed for one round by losing an opposed Charisma check, common, moderate, -3 pts.), Weakness (Sunlight, minor, per round, destroyed after 10 rounds, -8 points) Vulnerable (to attacks from sharp stabbing weapons made of wood Common, Moderate, -3 pts)

Background and History

When Mary Blood got off a bus in New York City, she was meat on a plate. Back in rural Indiana, there was nothing to do but drink cheap wine, get married, fade like a flower and grow old. Mary didn't want to do any of

that. Pretty enough to be a model or a dancer or an actress, she didn't quite know which she wanted to be—only that she wanted to get out of the cornfields and go become something glamorous. She succeeded, better than she could have hoped, although not quite the way she intended. She won't ever have to worry about her looks fading and she doesn't drink wine anymore.

Like a lot of pretty girls who show up in New York without any money or plans, the predators were on her before she even left the Port Authority Bus Terminal. A kind-looking, well-dressed older man offered her a job and a place to sleep. She accepted, not knowing what else to do. He wasn't a pimp—he was something much worse.

Mary had fallen in with the Van Helsing Foundation—the world's premier group of vampire hunters. It's unclear whether they were founded by the legendary Professor Van Helsing, but they claim to honor his legacy. Unbelievably ruthless, the Society doesn't make any distinction between vampires who prey on the living and those who just want to be left alone. Nor do they feel any qualms about killing ordinary people who get in their way. Sometimes they kill witnesses, if it's the most expedient way to cover their trail. Well-funded and powerful, with ten separate chapters and about forty active field agents worldwide, they are a force to be reckoned with in the occult underground.

The New York Chapter used Mary as bait, knowing that her youth and good looks would make her irresistible to their quarry. They sent her into a private club owned by an ancient Hungarian vampire named Count Zoltan, and used her to lure him to his doom. Mary was bitten during the course of the adventure, so her new friends in the Society prepared to have her killed. She had never trusted them, however, and ran away before they had a chance to pound a stake through her heart. By the time she arrived in the PCs' campaign city, she could no longer walk by day. She has been hiding out in the city's Goth scene ever since, dancing in clubs and drawing a little blood here and there. A real vampire among the fake ones. A lot of her victims are willing

and she never drains them enough to kill them. Mary is unusually powerful for a vampiress her age. Count Zoltan was one of the very ancient ones and his blood is in her veins. The Society knows this and considers her exceptionally dangerous. They will mobilize every resource they have to track her down. Desperate, Mary decides to turn to the Player Characters for aid. She has heard that they help people. The Van Helsing Foundation may also demand their assistance. Which side will the PCs take? The answer seems obvious, but there's a catch. Read on.

Appearance and Demeanor

Pretty, tall, thin and dark, not as pale as you expect a vampire to be, Mary looks like a professional actress or model. She holds herself gracefully and she knows just how to use her looks to get attention. People who see her immediately wonder why she never studied acting or competed in a beauty pageant. The answer is that she was a screw-up in High School and was more interested in getting drunk and partying than she was in actually studying anything. She had the looks, the charm, the natural poise, but no connections, no discipline and only the vaguest kind of ambition.

Because of the way she dresses and what her tattoos look like, people who meet her tend to assume that she became a vampire some time in the mid to late nineties. But in fact she's been undead for less than eighteen months—it's just that rural Indiana youth-culture lags a few years behind.

Mary Blood is her real name. It's Irish. She's darker than a typical Irish girl, but that's because her mom's family comes from somewhere in Yugoslavia. She heard her grandmother's Yugoslav accent enough while she was growing up that she can imitate it fairly well, but she doesn't fake an Eastern European accent all the time—just when she thinks it will impress the club kids. Her real voice is low and musical. Some guys describe it as enchanting, and it's hard to disagree once you've heard it. She has a Midwestern accent, but on her it sounds good.

She speaks standard English, but she isn't very well-educated and there are odd gaps in her knowledge of the world. People assume that this is because she is a mysterious, inhuman creature of the night, but in fact it's because she's a small-town girl who never paid attention in school.

Mary has never been very good at planning ahead (this is someone who showed up penniless in New York with nowhere to stay) and since she rose from her grave this has gotten worse.

Becoming a vampire has changed Mary's personality. She used to be wayward, spacey, dreamy and self-involved. A little withdrawn and not especially good at making conversation, she was popular, but only because of her looks. Now she radiates power, charisma and inhuman, diabolical charm. Always good at striking the pose and drawing attention to herself, now she positively glows with seductive allure. She is still self-absorbed, but in a subtly different way.

For as the PCs will learn, Mary Blood is a bad friend. She is as playful, graceful, shallow and devoid of mercy as a cat. She doesn't normally act evil and threatening but she lacks any kind of empathy. She cannot feel a thing for anyone and this makes her capable of shockingly bad behavior. She will hit targets with lethal force, she will get friends into trouble for the hell of it, she will hurt animals, children and old people if the whim strikes her. She has yet to kill anyone, but it's because she is trying not to draw attention to herself, not because she has a conscience. She feasts on the blood of the living every night, and she does not care if any of her meals get traumatized by the experience. If provoked, she can turn savagely murderous with no warning (see the quote at the beginning of her entry). She exploits the people around her, taking and taking without giving anything back. She's a vampire. It is in her nature to take, not to give.

Does this make her worse than the Van Helsing Foundation? Not really, but it may make it harder for the PCs to choose sides.

Adventures With Mary Blood:

1) And All the Sinners, Saints



As noted above, either the Van Helsing Foundation or Mary Blood herself will eventually come to the PCs for aid. If the Society approaches the Player Characters, they will be abrasive and confrontational. They don't ask the PCs to help them, they demand it, and they aren't above making half-veiled threats. Once the Player Characters have hunted beside them for a little while, the GM should make sure they have a chance to see how ruthless and bloodthirsty they are. Once they understand what the hunters are like, Mary Blood will come to them for help (if she hasn't already). Mary may claim to be a parahuman, whose powers make her resemble the vampires of mythology and tell the PCs that a gang of homicidal lunatics has mistaken her for a real vampire. Or she may just tell them the truth. If the PCs have had dealings with the Society before and have come to realize how ruthless and unpleasant it is, then she will offer to help them expose it and bring it down.

The head of the New York Chapter, Cyrus Zane, had a crush on her and he told her far too much about the Society's inner workings in order to impress her. She knows enough of their secrets to do them serious harm (this may in fact be the real reason why Cyrus Zane is trying so hard to have her killed).

Even if the PCs can't take the whole organization down, they should at least be able to put the New York Chapter out of business. They have about fifteen PL 5

agents (see the stats below) and while they might be able to call on another twenty-five or so from the other chapters they can't get reinforcements quickly—the other chapters are all busy, too.

If the PCs help her, she will attempt to join their team, live in their headquarters (or on their couch) and sponge off them. She is, as noted above, a lousy teammate and a worse houseguest. She cleans nothing and does no chores. She will try to provoke fights and entice her new comrades into trouble for the fun of it. She will work as little as possible on missions and may just get distracted and wander off when the team needs her. If they kick her off the team, she will be annoyed and she will hold a grudge.

A typical vampire-killer from the Van Helsing Foundation

PL: 5

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 6 **Attack Bonus:** 5
Defense: 5 (2 if Flatfooted)
Toughness Save: 5 (1 without Armor)
Fortitude Save: 5 **Reflexes Save:** 5
Willpower Save: 2 (5 vs. mental attacks)

Skills: Climb 3 (+2), Bluff 5 (+7), Craft (Mechanical) 6 (+8), Diplomacy 5 (+7), Gather Information 5 (+7), Investigate 7 (+8), Notice 8 (+10), Stealth 8 (+10), Sense Motive 5 (+7)

Feats: Assessment, Connected, Dodge Focus 3, Equipment 3 (15pts of Equipment), Improved Initiative, Interpose, Inventor, Ranged Pin (with crossbow), Track

Powers: Mind Shield 3

Equipment: Body Armor (5 Impervious Protection), Crossbow (Ranged Weapon, 5 Damage), Holy Symbol, Never-Ending Bag of Wooden Stakes (Melee Weapon, 5 Damage)

Complications: Fanatically dedicated to wiping out vampires, can't be reasoned with, will risk life, soul, reputation, imprisonment, in order to strike at a nosferatu. Does not care very much if he or she accidentally kills a human being while trying to slay a vampire.

2) Sisterhood of the Bloody Moon



After the PCs help Mary Blood escape or cripple the Van Helsing Foundation, things take an alarming turn.

The federal government becomes aware of Mary's activities and they make contact with her. Operation X is the Dept of Justice's special ultra-secret vampire-fighting unit (if there is a different federal agency that hunts vampires in your campaign, use them instead). They are a lot scarier than the amateurs at the Van Helsing Foundation, and Mary sees the advantages of going to work for them. She becomes an informant, giving them tips on other vampires and occult events (including the PCs, if any of them are magicians or supernatural creatures). Pretty soon she has seduced her contact and made him her willing slave. She uses her new clout with Operation X to have them eliminate her rivals and enemies in the occult underground, and begins almost by accident to take their turf.

Before long she leads a crèche of her own vampire spawn that she calls "The Sisterhood of the Bloody Moon" (the name doesn't mean anything—she just thinks it sounds cool). With help from Operation X, they begin to take over the occult underworld. Ruthless and savage, they cut a bloody swath through the night.

Mary grows crueler and more violent with each success and her organization is growing all the time. Creatures of darkness and evil magicians begin flocking to her cause. Can the PCs stop the menace they created when they saved her? Would whatever remains of the Van Helsing Society be willing to help them, or are they after the Player Characters, too?

Mary's Brood



PL: 7

Str: 20 (+5) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** -- (n/a)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 20 (+5) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 8
Defense: 7 **Toughness Save:** 7
Impervious **Fortitude Save:** n/a **Reflexes**
Save: 6 **Willpower Save:** 6

Skills: Bluff 9 (+13), Diplomacy 8 (+12),
Knowledge (Popular Culture) 6 (+7),
Intimidate 10 (+14), Notice 5 (+10), Stealth
7 (+10)

Feats: Attractive, Distract (linked to Bluff),
Fascinate (Linked to Bluff), Hide in Plain
Sight, Startle

Powers: Drain Constitution 2, Immunity 30
(Immune to all Fortitude effects),
Insubstantial 2 (Assume Gaseous Form),
Protection 7 (Extras: Impervious; Flaw:
Limited [vs. holy symbols (unless the "holy"
symbol is sacred to the powers of death and
darkness), silver, or magical weapons],
Regeneration 5 (Resurrection; Flaw: Limited
[Does not work if she has been beheaded or
impaled with a wooden stake]), Super-
Movement 1 (Wall-Crawling), Super-Senses
3 (Darkvision, Acute Hearing)

Drawbacks: Weakness (dependant on
blood, common, minor, -2pts.), Weakness
(holy symbols, dazed for one round by
losing an opposed Charisma check, common,
moderate, -3 pts.), Weakness (Sunlight,
minor, per round, destroyed after 10 rounds,
-8 points) Vulnerable (to attacks from sharp
stabbing weapons made of wood Common,
Moderate, -3 pts)

Background and History

Mary largely recruits her inner circle of minions from the city's club scene. They all have to have the right level of cool, the right level of attitude and the right level of beauty (pretty, but not quite as pretty as Mary Blood herself). Most of them are silly, catty young women who are reveling in their new-found power. None of them displays any trace of mercy.

SWEET ADELINE



Quote: "Yes, Governor? It's Sweet Adeline. I thought I'd see if you'd ever come up with the ransom I asked for... Yes, I know that was in 1936—what can I say, crime keeps me young. What with one thing and another I've been too busy to pay much attention to this matter for a while, but my Doomsday Cloud is as ready as ever to lay the city to waste... Yes? ... Well I'm afraid the price has gone up since 1936."

PL: 9

Real Identity: Adele Nolan

Dual Identity: Secret (goes by the alias "Addie Newman")

Group Affiliation: None (Former partner of Malice Moriarty, former partner of the Empress of the Airways)

Nationality: American

Height: 6'0"

Weight: 175 pounds

Hair Color: Blonde (sometimes dyes it purple)

Eye Color: Violet

Age: 108

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 18 (+4)

Int: 26 (+8) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 16 (+3)

Initiative: 4 **Attack Bonus:** 7

Defense: 8 (4 if she is caught flatfooted)

Toughness Save: 8 (4 if she is caught flatfooted, without her body armor)

Fortitude Save: 4 **Reflexes Save:** 6

Willpower Save: 8

Skills: Bluff 8 (+11), Craft (Chemical) 12 (+20), Craft (Electronics) 10 (+18), Craft (Mechanical) 12 (+20), Craft (Structural) 8 (+16), Diplomacy 7 (+10), Disable Device 12 (+20), Intimidate 8 (+11), Knowledge (Earth Sciences) 5 (+13), Knowledge (Life Sciences) 12 (+20), Knowledge (Physical Sciences) 12 (+20), Knowledge (Streetwise) 2 (+10), Knowledge (Technology) 12 (+20), Notice 9 (+12), Sense Motive 6 (+9), Stealth 3 (+7)

Feats: Defensive Roll 2, Distract (linked to Bluff), Dodge Focus 4, Fascinate (Linked to Bluff), Inventor, Improvised Tools, Leadership, Master Plan, Skill Mastery 2 (Craft [Chemical], Craft [Electronics], Craft [Mechanical], Craft [Structural], Knowledge [Earth Sciences], Knowledge [Life Sciences], Knowledge [Physical Sciences], Knowledge [Technology]), Startle

Powers: Device 9 (Aging Spray; Easy to Lose; Effect: Transform 9 [person into a debilitated old person], Device 2 (heavy leather jacket; Effect: Protection 2)

Equipment: 75 points worth of headquarters, vehicles, deathtraps and sinister devices.

Complications: Would rather make threats than carry them out.

Background and History

Sweet Adeline was one of the earliest female super-villains. She was in fact one of the very few female masterminds that emerged during the so-called Pulp Era, making her debut in 1935, when she walked into a downtown Chicago bank and absconded with over a quarter million dollars in new bills after she rendered the staff and patrons unconscious with a burst

of sleeping gas from her parasol. The local gendarmes were astounded when they attempted to collar the masked mystery woman only to have her escape through the air—her umbrella acting like a miniature auto-gyro, whirling about with enough speed to carry her aloft. Laughing wildly, she taunted the police, saying that from this point forward they could be expected to be outwitted by a “mere woman”. She then flew away, humming a cheerful tune all the while. This began a criminal career that lasted over a decade and spanned nearly the whole of the America Midwest.

Sweet Adeline was so named because of her habit of whistling the tune of that popular Barbershop Quartet standard while she committed her crimes. She was alternatively dubbed the Purple Peril due to her predilection for dressing in various shades of the “royal color”. Sweet Adeline was the prototypical arch-villain of the era. She was a brilliant chemist and engineer who used her genius to create seemingly impossible weapons and inventions. Her inventions included full-size clockwork soldiers who fired real machine guns, self-propelled darts whose tips were coated with a mind control drug and cloud-seeding crystals that changed ordinary rainwater into an acidic goop that instantly corroded metal and stone. The last was employed in a particularly audacious scheme, where she and the Empress of the Airways (another female villain) teamed-up to blackmail the entire city of St. Louis, Missouri. Her signature weapon—the one she had the most pride in developing—was her “aging essence”, a vile toxin that induced rapid decrepitude in living tissues -- human beings exposed to the substance aged years or even decades within minutes. Adeline enjoyed herself immensely once when she visited one of the Midwest’s most high-end department stores and surreptitiously substituted vials of her vile essence for the tester bottles of spray perfume that the shop clerks demonstrated for their affluent female customers. At the height of her career, she commanded a criminal network that covered three states and employed over two hundred henchmen. She was never a villain of the first rank, but she was

still a force to contend with in the underworld.

Sweet Adeline was actually Adele Nolan, a rather forgettable woman who worked as a low-ranking druggist for a large pharmaceutical concern. Though not really a split personality, Adele and Sweet Adeline were as far apart as night and day. Adele Nolan was a nervous, insecure woman, always fiddling with her hair and clothes, never quite comfortable in her own skin. Despite graduating *summa cum laude* from Sarah Lawrence College with a double degree (Chemistry and Industrial Engineering) she downplayed her own intelligence, and was always deferential toward authority figures (which were invariably men). A short, slightly pudgy woman with a bouffant hairdo, she was a perpetual also-ran in her career and romantic life, forever being passed over for less-qualified male employees at work or prettier but dimmer girls in the social world. No one suspected that this frustrated, thwarted woman was laughing at an immense private joke upon the world. As Sweet Adeline, she took a back seat to no one, got everything she ever wanted, and exacted revenge on anyone who crossed her.

The criminal career of the Purple Peril began a long sabbatical in August of 1947. Adeline had taken on a junior partner of sorts, a teenage prodigy named Malice Moriarty (yes, the grand-daughter of the legendary Professor Moriarty). The two made a formidable team; Malice used her organizational and strategic genius to plan out the execution of Adeline’s crimes to the second, while factoring in multiple contingencies, which maximizing the effectiveness of the Purple Peril’s wicked scientific creations. Malice also provided Adeline with the use of some of her grandfather’s old inventions—computational and electronic instruments which were far in advance of the technology of the day. The pair launched a crime wave that terrified the populace of Kansas City, Kansas—so much so that the mayor appealed to the New York City adventuress Nathalia Noble, latest in the line of the heroic Noble family.

Enlisting the aid of her partners-in-adventure (The “Noble Knights”), Nathalia

succeeded in tracking down Adeline and Malice to their lair in the hidden sub-basement of a sprawling manor, sparking a no-holds barred confrontation between Miss Noble and her aides and the two super-villainess and their henchmen. In the course of the fight, Sweet Adeline attempted to sneak up behind Nathalia and take her down with a syringe filled with Adeline's rapid-aging compound; for her trouble Miss Noble throw Adeline over her shoulder in one of the machines Malice Moriarty had brought over from her grandfather's old hideaways. Adeline was seemingly electrocuted in a tangle of cables and wires, her body flailing spasmodically, and then collapsing to the floor in a smoldering heap. Shortly thereafter, Nathalia and her sidekicks routed Malice and the remainder of the gang. The members of the Purple Peril's syndicate were given lengthy prison sentences, Malice was given over to the custody of Nathalia's psychiatrist uncle, where she was ultimately reformed (she went on to become a noted lecturer on the subject of criminal behavior in adolescents), the equipment found in the lair was catalogued and shelved by the federal government, and Sweet Adeline was quickly consigned to the dustbin of history.

Curiously enough, the authorities were never able to get the equipment they had secured from the Purple Peril's laboratory to work properly, nor were they able to replicate any of her results, even when using Adeline's original formulas or schematics. They had no explanation for this at the time, though later researches who reviewed their efforts would attribute their failures to a mysterious 'X' factor that Adeline possessed—perhaps some kind of mutant or psionic power.

But in truth, the Purple Peril was not quite all the way gone. The mechanism she had been thrown against had been an experimental recording device of Professor Moriarty's—one designed to record and play back the patterns of the human brain for analysis. The electrical accident that had cut short Adeline's physical existence preserved her mentality on the mechanism's vinyl playback disc. Her mind would remain trapped there for the next half-century,

dreaming hazily of past glories, unaware of the passage of time. The Purple Peril now existed inside a cheap plywood box in a warehouse in Topeka, Kansas.

There she remained until a little more than five years ago. Due to a bureaucratic shuffle under the Department of Homeland Defense, the various electronic devices that had been salvaged from the lab over fifty years ago was transferred to the building that housed the offices of the MARS-T Project (Military Advanced Response to Superhuman Threats) in Baltimore, MD., the weapons development arm of PDI. There it sat for a few months collecting dust, until the Project offices were visited by a federally sanctioned superhero and his nineteen year old side-kick, the Stainless Steel Sergeant and the Iron Corporal. Both were elite soldiers outfitted with powered armor suits.

Irked that his sidekick was not paying sufficient attention during their tour of the facilities, the Sergeant assigned the young hero the job of cataloguing all the boxes the MARS-T offices had recently been shipped from all over the country, and told his kid partner not to return to HQ until the task was complete. Grumbling, the Iron Corporal set about his task, working well into the late evening hours.

Growing bored and tired, the Corporal began to open up a few of the boxes and play around with their contents. Coming across one marked "Kansas City, 1947" that apparently held some kind of old-time record player and a thick vinyl disc, he decided to plug the machine in and listen to a few big-band era tunes. This was a life-changing mistake. The old, frayed cord sent a surge of electricity through the machine that then arced back through the headpiece of the Corporal's armor, creating a sort of feedback loop; this jolted him unconscious despite the insulation in the armor (he had previously opened for comfort's sake while sorting the crates). He lay unconscious for minutes...or from that point onward, depending on one's point of view. Moriarty's machine was left a melted ruin, the secret of its operation gone forever.

When his body got off the floor, it was inhabited by the mind of Adele Nolan—

Sweet Adeline. The arc of electricity had somehow wiped her brain patterns from the disc and copied them onto the Iron Corporal's brain. While completely disoriented and nearly panic-stricken at first, Adeline quickly recovered her wits sufficiently to make good her departure from the MARS Project building. She wandered aimlessly for a few days, becoming familiar with the modern world while she figured out how she had come to be trapped in a male body. She had access to enough of the Iron Corporal's memories to understand how to work his ATM card, so she withdrew enough funds to put a few hundred miles between herself and Baltimore. Holing up in a hotel, she made herself familiar enough with his power armor to pull a couple bank jobs, scoring a few million in ready cash. The Iron Corporal then vanished entirely.

"Addie Newman" now works as a saleswoman for an avant-garde bookstore in one of the more Bohemian sections of the campaign city. The book store's patrons and other employees are a diverse, tolerant lot, so those who have picked up on the tell-tale signs of Addie's actual gender are polite enough not to comment. Meanwhile, a certain purple-clad villainess thought long dead dramatically reappeared three years ago—and has been slowly but surely working her way up the super-criminal hierarchy, staging one audacious scheme after another.

Appearance and Demeanor

In the years since her rebirth, Sweet Adeline has undergone extensive hormone treatments and cosmetic surgery to reshape her acquired body to more closely fit her female psyche. The former Iron Corporal now appears to be a slim young woman in her early twenties with a somewhat-vintage sense of style. The Iron Corporal was an Olympic caliber athlete, and while the former kid partner's physique has lost a great deal of muscle mass (due both to the feminizing drugs to which it has been subjected and the effects of Adeline's indolent lifestyle), it remains remarkably fit and well-toned, a contrast to Adele's original plump form. This will likely change with age and time, as Adeline continues to indulge in

vintage wines, fine food, and pampered relaxation, with her fit frame eventually going to pot as a result. She's already getting a bit of a tummy.

In her civilian guise she dresses conservatively, typically in loose fitting garments chosen in part to conceal any tell-tale physical characteristics that might give away her remaining male characteristics. As the Purple Peril, she is customarily attired in a slouching, wide-brimmed purple hat, a purple overcoat, black gloves and black boots. A purple wig and a silk scarlet mask that conceals the lower half of her face complete her disguise. In warmer weather Adeline will forgo the overcoat in favor of a blouse and skirt of similar hue. If she is feeling particularly dapper, she will be decked out in a purple tuxedo and tails, complete with lavender hued domino mask.

The Purple Peril is a calculating, ruthless mastermind, determined to resurrect the minor but still feared criminal empire she commanded in the Pulp Era. Despite the shock of finding herself trapped in a male body nearly sixty years into her own future, Sweet Adeline remains bold and confident. She is convinced that her astounding intellect will allow her to thrive in the modern era just as she did in her own time. This attitude has led to a few setbacks, as she simply underestimates the capabilities of 21st century law enforcement and the power level of today's costumed crusaders. In the three years since re-launching her career she has come closer to getting captured than she ever did in the nineteen thirties or forties. On two of these occasions, she became so unnerved that the Iron Corporal persona re-asserted itself for several hours once she reached the safety of her hiding place. Fortunately, Garrett St. John (the Corporal's real identity) was so overwhelmed by the changes Adeline has made in his appearance that both times he broke down and curled up in a fetal position crying until Adeline's mind regained dominance over the body. Adeline is steadily growing more cautious, as she comes to understand that she's playing in a different league now.

Sweet Adeline is more inclined to *threaten* violence than to actually inflict pain

or suffering on a mass scale—she has found that people tend to fight back or flee when they are harmed, but are generally compliant in turning over whatever she desires to her so long as they are sufficiently intimidated. She therefore focuses on blackmail, extortion, bank robbery, and industrial espionage. She is by no means reticent to employ violence when she feels it is necessary however—though she is more likely to imprison someone who has crossed her in a elaborate death-trap and then abandon them to their own devices or use them as guinea pig in some cruel experiment than execute the offending person in a hail of gunfire.

Sweet Adeline has yet to fully adapt to the 21st century, and her schemes still reflect her origins as a pulp villainess. Unleashing a quintet of mechanical ballerinas that march into the center of town and spew sleeping gas from their mouths to render the whole citizenry easy pickings, sending letters dipped with her rapid aging formula to multimillionaire celebrities and then demanding exorbitant sums for the antidote, or implanting post-hypnotic suggestions in top executives that cause them to siphon funds from their corporations and deposit them in her Swiss bank account...these are the types of ideas that flavor her sinister plans. Her capers always veer toward the elaborate and baroque, and sometimes fail not so much due to outside interference as because they are overly complicated. She tends to rely on her pharmaceutical discoveries and mechanical contraptions, as she is still studying this era's technology. She has long since broken down the Iron Corporal armor into spare parts to help her learn about the latest advances in engineering and metallurgy.

Always a bit of a sybarite, Sweet Adeline greatly enjoys creature comforts and luxuries, reveling in the pleasures her ill-gotten gains afford her; she disdains any sort of manual labor or physical exertion, considering such to be beneath her. Despite her love of pleasure, she does not indulge in excessive alcohol use or recreational drugs, preferring to spend her lucre on clothes, jewelry, gourmet

chocolates and the like. She is careful not to flaunt her illicit wealth overmuch in her secret identity, as she does not wish to draw unwanted attention.

Though she could reasonably be termed a transsexual, Sweet Adeline has not as yet had any irreversible procedures performed on her new body, because the Iron Corporal's submerged consciousness surges forth each time she begins to contemplate such steps and the ensuing struggler distracts her. Adeline is very disconcerted by her present "condition", though she conceals her feelings when in the company of the various hirelings she employs. While she occasionally enjoys the younger, more athletic form her mind now inhabits, in her mind she still sees herself as entirely female. She is in almost constant distress that this is not the case physically—and may never be again. Where Sweet Adeline is confident and commanding, her alter-ego Addie Newman is a shy, timid figure who speaks with a slight stammer whenever she becomes excited or nervous. She is especially withdrawn and halting around attractive men. Her reincarnation in a male body has made Adeline even more insecure about her appearance than she was in her prior existence. As a result she tends to go a bit overboard with elaborate hair-styles and make-up. This of course draws more attention to her, not less, precisely the opposite result she hopes to achieve.

In her Addie Newman identity she is cautious about her movements in public, avoiding areas where an individual like herself might be at risk for assault. Anyone who actually attacks or insults her due to her nature will find themselves marked for vicious revenge. She will never forget or forgive any such transgressions against her person.

In case the GM decides to run a scenario that involves time-travel, or the campaign is set in the Pulp/Golden Age era, here is the character write-up for the Sweet Adeline of that time period, in her original female form. During this era, her physical abilities are modest, and she has no taste for personal combat whatsoever. Despite this, she is far

more confident and sure of her prowess than she is in her contemporary incarnation, much more in her element as one of the leading arch-villainess of the day. She maintains strong connections in the criminal underworld and commands a band of loyal henchmen to whom her word is law.

Golden Age Sweet Adeline



PL: 9

Str: 9 (-1) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 11 (+1)
Int: 26 (+8) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus:** 7
Defense: 8 (4 if she is caught flatfooted)
Toughness Save: 8 (1 if she is caught flatfooted, without her body armor)
Fortitude Save: 1 **Reflexes Save:** 4
Willpower Save: 10

Skills: Bluff 8 (+12), Craft (Chemical) 12 (+20), Craft (Electronics) 10 (+18), Craft (Mechanical) 12 (+20), Craft (Structural) 8 (+16), Diplomacy 7 (+11), Disable Device 12 (+20), Intimidate 8 (+12), Knowledge (Earth Sciences) 5 (+13), Knowledge (Life Sciences) 12 (+20), Knowledge (Physical Sciences) 12 (+20), Knowledge (Streetwise) 2 (+10), Knowledge (Technology) 12 (+20), Notice 9 (+12), Sense Motive 6 (+9), Stealth 3 (+7)

Feats: Defensive Roll 2, Distract (linked to Bluff), Connected, Contacts, Dodge Focus 4, Fascinate (Linked to Bluff), Inventor, Improvised Tools, Leadership, Master Plan,

Minions 6 (a crew of twenty-five 45 point criminal cohorts), Skill Mastery 2 (Craft [Chemical], Craft [Electronics], Craft [Mechanical], Craft [Structural], Knowledge [Earth Sciences], Knowledge [Life Sciences], Knowledge [Physical Sciences], Knowledge [Technology]), Startle, Teamwork.

Powers: Device 9 (Aging Spray; Easy to Lose; Effect: Transform 9 [person into a debilitated old person], Device 2 (heavy leather jacket; Effect: Protection 2)

Equipment: 75 points worth of headquarters, vehicles, deathtraps and sinister devices.

Complications: Would rather make threats than carry them out.

Adventures With Sweet Adeline

1) Sweet Adeline and the Deadline of Doom

One of the PCs' contacts in the city government gets in touch. There is an aide to the Deputy Mayor who needs to talk to them, and fast. He'll meet them in a parking garage near the train station in half an hour. Langley Burns is a big, bluff, handsome man in his early thirties—a born politician. He has something on his conscience and he doesn't dare jeopardize his career by taking it through the regular channels. Time may be running out in any case.

Two days ago, the mayor's office received a tape-recorded threat from someone who called herself "Sweet Adeline", like the masked villain from the 1930s. The message had been recorded on an antique Dictaphone and no one knew how to play it back, so it sat there without anyone listening to it. Yesterday they started taking phone calls from the same person. She sounded angry that that they hadn't listened to her previous message, and said that she was going to give them one more chance. Unless the city pays her one million dollars within the next twenty-four hours, passenger trains are going to start crashing into one another.

No one really knew who should take this call. The mayor was out of town at a conference and there was in any case no protocol for dealing with matters like this. The city is broke—they don't have a million

dollars in liquid assets that they could convert into cash. So the mayor wasn't notified and nothing was done. The police were informed and so was Amtrak, but it doesn't seem to Langley Burns like they took much action. The trains are still running and Sweet Adeline isn't in custody.

Sweet Adeline called twenty-two hours ago. If something really is going to happen, it will happen soon. He's read up about Sweet Adeline on Wikipedia and can give the PCs the facts about her that are generally known. Langley is uncomfortable bothering the PCs about this, but he feels even more uncomfortable about the way his superiors have let it slide. But in fact not everyone has dropped the ball. As the PCs start investigating the rail yard, Amtrak suspends all trains coming into and out of the station until further notice.

Sweet Adeline has attached six boxes to the rail yard's switching mechanisms. These devices will allow her to take control of the switches and crash trains full of weary commuters into one another. Each box is booby-trapped with her fast-aging formula. It takes a Disable Device Check vs. DC 15 to disable each box, but a roll vs. DC 20 to do it without getting a face full of the gas. As the PCs search for and disable the boxes, passengers in the train station get increasingly upset. Amtrak can only delay the trains for three hours or so before pressure from the top forces them to start the system moving again. Can the PCs foil Sweet Adeline's sinister plot in time?

Each box is equipped with a telephone handset, and as the PCs dismantle the second-to-the-last one Sweet Adeline will give them a call. She is aggravated with them for disrupting her big come-back and will challenge them to fight her on top of the TransGlobal Tower (a big skyscraper downtown) tonight at midnight, if they dare.

Sweet Adeline will not show up for the duel. She has however left a large bomb for the PCs, gift-wrapped in a big heart-shaped purple box.

2) Sweet Adeline and the Other Deadline of Doom

The Purple Peril is back! Another Dictaphone tape turns up at City Hall. This time they know that it's a genuine threat from a real supervillain, so the Mayor's staff settles in to wait for her phone call. She does in fact call the next day, annoyed that they've ignored another one of her deadlines. She asks if the Mayor has returned from his trip yet. They decline to answer. So she puts him on the phone—she has kidnapped him on his way back from the conference. She would like ten million dollars this time (which is not as much as it sounds like—the caper itself has cost her seven million so far). She will age the mayor one year for each minute that they miss her new deadline.

The Deputy Mayor assumes control of the office. He would like to be mayor himself, so he announces that the city does not negotiate with terrorists. Almost as an afterthought, he calls the FBI. It's an interstate kidnapping case, and that's their beat.

Rolling his eyes in exasperation, Langley Burns goes to the PCs for help once more. The message said that the money is supposed to be delivered to the creepy old deserted fairgrounds off the interstate.

If the PCs show up, the Purple Peril's minions are waiting. She has hired a full time criminal "crew" of aging black thugs, and dressed them all in matching purple sport-coats, turtlenecks and sunglasses. They actually look pretty menacing with their shaved heads, scars and handlebar moustaches—sort of like a really threatening streetcorner a-capella singing group. The Four Tops gone bad. Cagey old dogs, they are all used to working together as a team and have their battle tactics worked out pretty well.

Sweet Adeline herself will swoop down on the scene in a miniature purple zeppelin and hose the PCs down with her aging formula if she gets a chance.

She is holding the Mayor in an elaborate set of restraints in a public storage unit that she has rented nearby. A machine is ready to spray him with a dose of the aging serum once per minute when the deadline expires. He finds this incredibly

exciting and has developed a painful crush on his captor. He will urge anyone who comes to his rescue not to hit her too hard. This may complicate matters. It will get even more complicated if he realizes that she's actually a man.

3) Sweet Adeline and Yet Another Deadline of Doom

The Purple Peril is getting a bit miffed. After two different schemes and millions of dollars in expenses, she still has yet to see her name in the papers. After taking some time to reflect and reconsider, she tries a different approach.

This time, instead of mailing Dictaphone messages to the Mayor's office, she goes straight to the press. A few phone calls and a threatening letter or two later, she finally strikes gold. "Mad Fiend Threatens City!" the headlines scream at last. The Deputy Mayor is furious and actually tries to have the Department of Homeland Security throw the publishers in jail for aiding and abetting terrorism. This makes him look like a fool, and there is worse to come.

This time Sweet Adeline isn't messing around. She has dug one of her doomsday devices, the "Metropolitan Melting Machine" out of storage and if the old newspaper accounts are correct, it's capable of making it rain acid. If she doesn't get a hundred million dollars in seventy-two hours, death falls from the sky. By now she knows that the city can't come up with that much cash on such short notice, so she suggests that perhaps some consortium of philanthropists or the city's Chamber of Commerce could provide the funds. She asks that the mayor deliver it in person, and that he come naked (for she knows he won't be able to resist this). The city is in an uproar, the FBI swarms all over town looking for leads—it's all as gratifying as Sweet Adeline could ever have wished for. To help hype the event even further, she arranges a demonstration of machine's power, and destroys a prominent local landmark (a giant fiberglass statue of a grinning lemur which stands outside a big used-car dealership).

She has hired a teenaged Asian girl-gang for security and dressed them up in identical purple evening gowns with tiaras and gas masks. Each one wears a sash with some made-up title like "Miss Violence" or "Miss Mayhem". She calls them her "Pageant of Crime". They look even weirder than they sound. Some of them wear bouffants or beehives, while others have braids, pigtails or Mohawks. The tattoos of dragons and Chinese characters on their shoulders look very odd with the evening gowns and tiaras, as do the shotguns, nunchucks, machetes and WW2 era submachine guns they carry.

The Pageant have staked out the handoff site—the ballroom of a rented party-boat. Sweet Adeline has filled the ballroom with so many purple helium balloons that it's impossible to see five feet in front of you, or for the SWAT teams outside to get a clear shot at anything.

Despite stern warnings from the Deputy Mayor and the FBI, the Mayor insists that for the good of his city he must go to meet Sweet Adeline, naked and alone.

An eccentric software billionaire from England supplies fifty-five million dollars in cash, and the Chamber of Commerce comes up with another ten. Sweet Adeline accepts the deal, and some of the mayor's loyal aides pack a truck full of the money (even in hundreds it weighs more than a ton.). The Mayor drives it up the ramp onto the boat, wearing nothing but a bathrobe. The PCs, or course, are concealed in the back, thanks to a little tight maneuvering by Langley Burns.

Alas, the Mayor is much too excited to drive very well and the truck is soon hanging halfway off the ramp. It may topple over into the water at any second. Can the PCs save the Mayor, the money, the city, and defeat Sweet Adeline and her Pageant of Crime all in one action-packed slugfest?

After the whole debacle is over, there is a big shake-up in the ranks at City Hall, and Langley Burns somehow emerges as the new Deputy Mayor.

black phantom



Quote: *I'm the real hero in this neighborhood—you people don't do nothing but fly overhead or swoop down and take folks off to prison. I live here!"*

PL: 9

Real Identity: George Tyler Washington (always goes by "Tyler")

Dual Identity: Secret. But a few people from his former neighborhood suspect the truth.

Group Affiliation: None

Nationality: American

Height: 6'2"

Weight: 215 pounds

Hair Color: Black

Eye Color: Brown

Age: 28

Str: 32/14 (+11/+2) **Dex:** 16 (+3)

Con: 28/12 (+9/+1) **Int:** 10 (+0)

Wis: 16 (+3) **Cha:** 10 (+0)

Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 8 **Defense:** 8

Toughness Save: 9 (Impervious)

Fortitude Save: 9 **Reflexes Save:** 5

Willpower Save: 9

Skills: Knowledge (Popular Culture) 3 (+3), Knowledge (Streetwise) 5 (+5), Notice 5 (+8), Stealth 4 (+7)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Power Attack, Rage 2, Takedown Attack

Powers: Enhanced Constitution 16, Enhanced Strength 18, Impervious Toughness 9, Super-Strength 6 (Maximum Load= 48 tons; Power Feats: Groundstrike, Shockwave, Thunderclap)

Background and History

Tyler Washington was supposed to be a superhero, but things somehow just didn't work out that way. Both his parents left his life while he was still a baby. He was raised by his grandma. She was the closest thing their block had to a mayor. Bonita Washington was the person everyone came to with their problems, the lady who knew everybody and could get things done.

The only person she couldn't seem to help was her grandson. Not very bright and not very good at controlling himself, Tyler was as strong as a bull—stronger than any human being should have been. When he was ten he could already pick up the refrigerator. He wasn't bulletproof or particularly resistant to damage and he wasn't anywhere near as strong as most superheroes. So he wouldn't listen to his grandma's pleas to put on a costume and go fight crime.

She spent too much money having a seamstress make him a costume that he wouldn't wear. She came up with a superhero name ("Black Phantom") that embarrassed him—that sounded dorky and old-fashioned and '70s. The 40th Street projects needed a protector, she told him, but it fell on deaf ears.

Never a member of a gang, Tyler ran with a bad crowd and got in trouble. His strength made it too easy to win fights and commit crimes.

A couple of years ago the authorities decided to start dismantling the 40th Street projects and split folks up among the rest of the city. Tyler went to jail for an assault in this period and the stress finally started to unhinge his grandma. She got really depressed, wouldn't leave her room. When they moved her out of the neighborhood and into a high rise where she knew nobody, she wouldn't come out of her apartment for days at a time.

Meanwhile, her grandson was trying to hide the fact that his strength had grown enormously in prison. He was even bulletproof now. Tyler got out of prison just after his grandma died. It took weeks for her neighbors to figure out that she was dead. The neighborhood was a ghost town, he had failed to protect it. His grandma was dead of a broken heart. The heart he broke. The costume was waiting.

Now he stalks the streets of his deserted neighborhood, angry and alone. It's too late to save it, but he's going to try anyway. Whoever sends the first bulldozers is in for a surprise.

Appearance and Demeanor

Angry and miserable, he isn't very articulate and he speaks in a mumble unless he's worked up into a rage. Tyler is less than thirty but hard living and jail make him look older. Out of costume, his face looks as dinged up and battle-scarred as a prize-fighter. A scar next to his right eye has pulled it into a perpetually sad expression.

Tyler has no regard for his own safety. In fact he kind of wants to die. But he's not reckless around innocent bystanders. It's very important to him to finally be a hero and he doesn't want any civilians to get hurt. He's never killed anybody, but he might get angry enough or scared enough to do it under the right circumstances. He would never take hostages, since he doesn't much care whether he lives or dies himself.

An Adventure with Black Phantom

1) The Phantom Strikes

Construction is ready to begin on a giant new condominium complex, just on

the southeastern edge of the old 40th Street projects. The day before they are scheduled to break ground, there is an incident. No one will tell the press what happened, but tarps have been thrown over everything on the construction site and no one is being allowed into the area.

Late that evening, one of the PCs' contacts gets in touch. The Mayor's Office needs a serious favor from them. Some time early this morning, there was a supervillain attack on the construction site. At least, that's what they think it was. The whole thing seems totally inexplicable and kind of frightening. The contact gives them a manila envelope containing some photos of the site. Someone has stacked three bulldozers neatly on top of one another. This has of course completely wrecked all three machines—in fact no one in the city government is sure how to unstack them. They don't have any cranes that are big enough. Who has done this? How? Why? The Mayor is under a lot of pressure from the city's real-estate barons to find out and put a stop to this.

If the PCs think to look into the background of the construction company, throw them a red herring. Zarko Construction is one of the biggest, oldest, best-connected firms in the city. A national company, they have offices and work-crews in major metropolitan areas all over this part of the US. They also have a reputation for being entangled with organized crime. Another, nearly as large company, Barzinni Associates, was also bidding on the contract, and lost. They have stronger, deeper ties to the mob. Could the Mafia have hired a supervillain to disrupt the construction? If the PCs start looking into this connection, perhaps the mob starts to harass them in turn. Barzinni Associates may even call in a supervillain of their own if they really start to feel the PCs breathing down their necks.

Meanwhile, the real culprit lurks in the deserted courts and alleys of the 40th Street projects, ready to do battle with any more bulldozers that threaten his neighborhood. At night he curls up in his room in his grandma's old apartment and cries himself to sleep. It looks like an overgrown kid's room, the PCs may note if

they ever see it. A poorly-assembled model airplane still hangs over his bed.

If the PCs venture into the empty projects, they'll see Black Phantom's graffiti (he's not a very good or artful tagger) everywhere. He will try to drive them away by throwing cars at them from behind a building and he'll set traps for them if he can. He's knows the neighborhood very well and he'll use the ground to his advantage, playing cat and mouse for as long as he can without coming to grips with them directly. However, if one of the PCs is black and sounds as though they come from the inner city, he may decide to approach them

separately from the rest of the group, tell them his sad story and ask for their help.

Just as the PCs are on the verge of catching the Black Phantom or of winning him over, Zarko Construction gets tired of waiting and uses its mob connections to hire a supervillain to kill him. Intending to set an example for anyone else who messes with them, they send the most vicious bastard they could find on short notice—Code Name: Wifebeater (see page 21).

If Barzinni Associates has also hired a super-thug, perhaps everyone winds up confronting Black Phantom and one another at the same time.

Code Name: Wifebeater



Quote: "Go on, beg me to stop—that would make this perfect!"

PL: 10

Real Identity: Willy Zeiss

Dual Identity: Secret—his real name isn't known to anyone (including himself) and no one who remembers him as Willy Zeiss is still alive.

Group Affiliation: None (but he can be hired to work with a team)

Nationality: German

Height: 6'1"

Weight: 240 lbs

Hair Color: Bald

Eye Color: Blue-Gray

Age: 30

Str: 20 (+5) **Dex:** 22 (+6) **Con:** 18 (+4)

Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 14 (+2)

Initiative: 10 **Attack Bonus:** 14

Defense: 13 (6 if he is caught flatfooted, without his shield) **Toughness Save:** 8 (4 if he is caught Flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** 8

Reflexes Save: 13 **Willpower Save:** 4 (8 vs. mental attacks with his shield)

Skills: Acrobatics 12 (+18), Bluff 6 (+8), Escape Artist 10 (+16), Intimidate 9 (+11),

Notice 10 (+14), Search 8 (+12), Sense Motive 4 (+8), Stealth 8 (+14)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Acrobatic Bluff, All-Out Attack, Assessment, Connected, Contacts, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 3, Endurance, Evasion 2, Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Throw, Improved Trip, Move-By Action, Power Attack, Prone Fighting, Redirect, Sneak Attack, Startle, Stunning Attack, Takedown Attack, Taunt, Tracking, Weapon Bind

Powers: Device (Easy to Lose; Shield 4, Melee Weapon [+3 damage; Extra: Mighty], Mind-Shield 4)

Complications: Talks too much.

Background and History

He doesn't actually have a wife to beat, he quickly assures anyone who asks. But he has worse habits. He's dedicated his whole life to the art of vicious atrocity and he's proven himself to have a rare talent for it, time and again.

A self-made supervillain, Code Name: Wifebeater always dreamed of being a thug for hire and he's had to struggle long and hard to become one. He's an amazingly competent soldier, disciplined, talented and determined, but the supervillain underground is full of other guys who can shoot like Olympic marksmen and kick Navy SEALs to death with their hands tied behind their back. It's his brilliant sadism that makes him stand out from the pack.

All of his hard work and tireless self-promotion have finally paid off. From the smoke-filled back rooms of Tokyo to the sordid alleys of New York, the whole criminal underworld knows that if you want a really dirty job done fast, call Code Name: Wifebeater.

No one is precisely sure of his origins. He speaks English, Spanish and French with a German accent. People who have heard him speak German say that he sounds like an upper-middle-class person from Brandenburg. He talks a lot about himself, so anyone who spends much time around him will learn that he was a skinhead, that he beat a Turkish immigrant to death and had to go into hiding, that he

joined the French Foreign Legion in order to hide out, and that they are the ones who recognized and cultivated his phenomenal talent for violence. He served two tours in their elite paratrooper regiment and saw combat in Africa on a number of occasions. It was as good as he had always hoped.

He either left the Legion to pursue his dream of being a freelance killer, or else he got kicked out for being a loudmouth and for bullying new recruits. Sometimes he tells the story one way, sometimes he tells it another.

After he left, Wifebeater came to the United States, where all the best muscle jobs could be found. He hired on with a big, scary security firm that has contracts to provide bodyguards for the State Department, covert operations squads for the Department of Defense and hired thugs for dubious parties worldwide. In this capacity he served on the personal staff of a number of master villains, and proved his worth to them as a tough, determined hireling with a refreshingly complete lack of scruples.

His German accent and threatening appearance always served him well here. Within a few years he had enough contacts in the supervillain world to go out on his own as an independent consultant. He hired an ad firm to design him a costume, bought some illegal wonder-weapons and got some very expensive tissue implants taken from captured superheroes. On the advice of an arch-villain called the Hammer of Doom, he selected the most hostile and offensive code name he could think of, to make himself more memorable. He is now in the process of building a client list and a good investment portfolio for his nascent business.

He can be hired for any job, no matter how dirty. In fact, he's trying to carve out a niche for himself as the guy you can go to for jobs no one else will do.

To help reduce his vulnerability and make himself immune to blackmail, he systematically hunted down and killed his whole family, as well as every childhood pal, former girlfriend, elementary school teacher, etc. that he could find. Then he hired a psychic he had once done some work for to

erase all his early memories. Now there is no one who could ever be used as a hostage against him, no one who knows his secrets (including himself), no human being left alive that he ever felt any sentimental attachment to. He can't reveal his own name under torture because he doesn't know what it is anymore. He boasts about these things to prospective clients and to anyone else around him, in the hope that it will give him a competitive edge.

Absolutely loyal, but not entirely fearless, he would never reveal an employer's secrets for money but he's not sure he wouldn't if his life were at stake. To keep himself from blabbing under torture, he has purchased an expensive set of mental blocks (from the same psychic who erased his memory) that prevent him from ever betraying a client. It is important that everyone know this, friend and foe alike, so he tells anyone who will listen.

Appearance and Demeanor

He is manic, hateful, cruel and never seems to stop talking. This is partly a pose, intended to make him stand out against the competition. There is no such thing as bad publicity, he is keenly aware—especially in his occupation. Anyway he's a bullying blabbermouth by nature so he may as well try to make it work to his advantage.

Code Name: Wifebeater speaks very good English, although his French is even better. In any of these three languages, he is adept at coming up with inventive taunts and threats for his foes. Cheerfully violent, devoid of mercy and honor, he's capable of any vicious atrocity, but he won't go crazy on civilians or cause wanton damage without a good reason. He may look totally out of control, but it's an act. He'd never do anything that might give him a reputation for being unreliable.

He often chats with his victims about his own private affairs—the stocks he's thinking of investing in, the difficulties of finding office space in New York, the way a canker sore inside his mouth bothers him. He never drops any information that you could use to inconvenience his employer, but he's weirdly open about everything else. He's also a busybody, constantly asking

teammates and enemies alike about their personal lives and offering them scary, useless, bad advice (“You look like life has got you all grumpy and frowny-face. You should find a woman and stab her. That will turn your frown upside-down, yeah?”)

Adventures With Code-Name: Wifebeater

1) Invitation to a Bash in the Chops

Code Name: Wifebeater wants to get in touch with a Player Character (preferably one who is PL 9-10). He finds an interesting way to do it.

One evening, a shy, fat young man named Herbert Bunce starts smashing the windows out of every car he can find on a street the PC has been known to frequent. When confronted, Herbie is so mortified that he can barely speak to the PC (his stammer doesn't help), but he manages to get out that Code Name: Wifebeater needs to see them. If they don't come fight him on top of a skyscraper at midnight, he will kill one random innocent person every hour until they appear. He actually hopes they'll be a little late—he loves killing innocent people but he never does it unless he has a good excuse and he gets one so seldom. If they tell any member of their team where they are going, or alert the authorities in any way, he will blow up the first senior tour bus he sees and make sure that all the nice old people on board die.

Herbie begs for mercy. Wifebeater said he was going to kill Herbie's girlfriend if he didn't find some way of getting the message to the PC. He was too embarrassed to admit that he didn't have one.

Herbie has a phone number the PCs can call if they want to talk to Wifebeater. If they give him a call, he gladly explains to them what this is all about. He needs to do more to promote his image, and he thinks that beating up a well-known superhero would be the very thing he needs to raise his profile with prospective clients. He is perfectly serious about his threats, but he also thinks the PC will understand that it's to their advantage to play along with him. He will be taping the whole fight with a web cam, and if the PC beats him, it's their

image that will benefit. He thinks he can take them. What do they think?

Wifebeater is telling the truth. It's not an ambush, he'll fight them fair and square. How will they explain their absence to their teammates? Will they make Wifebeater's demo reel, or wind up on his blooper tape instead?

2) How Chad Got the Corner Office

G. Stansfield Beaumont has a problem. A well-entrenched executive at a huge multinational corporation called Globarchy Inc., Stan is getting older and a young Turk named Chad Upshaw is after his job. Chad is younger, more aggressive and perhaps more ruthless than Stan and his eventual victory seems almost inevitable.

So Stan decides to fight dirty. He used to do some investment counseling for the Mexican Mafia and he still knows how to get in touch with them. They put the word out that he is looking for a supervillain to do an extra-dirty job. Stan wants someone to maim and disfigure Chad's seven-year-old daughter, Madison. Surely a crippled, mutilated child will be enough of a distraction for Chad to lose his edge. Then Stan can fight him on a level playing field. Stan doesn't want the girl killed—that would be too easy to get over. Instead he wants her condition to be a constant source of worry and distraction for Chad.

Once the word gets out among the supervillain community about the kind of dirty job Stan is hiring for, a bidding war ensues. There are a lot of eager young villains desperate to make a name for themselves and show prospective clients how vicious they can be. Jobs like this don't come along every day and the competition is fierce. Code Name: Wifebeater aces out everyone else—he agrees to do the job for nothing. He'll take it on just for the boost it will give his reputation. This causes some resentment on the part of his fellow villains.

A minor villain (pick a really lame and useless one from your campaign) goes to Chad (he doesn't get to talk to Chad directly, but does manage to get in touch with his lawyer) and warns him. Chad's lawyer in turn contacts the PCs. They aren't allowed to speak with Chad or his wife, both

of whom are very busy, but they are asked to go get little Madison out of her boarding school in Connecticut and transport her safely to the family home in the Bahamas. If they have some way of doing this themselves, then so much the better. If they need transportation, no expense will be spared. Mr. Upshaw is sure they know best how to protect his child and he'll gladly facilitate whatever plan they come up with.

If the PCs ask for a reward themselves, the lawyer says that he assumed they'd do the job out of a sense of civic duty. If they persist, he shrugs and agrees to pay them a large sum of money. As it happens, he has brought a large briefcase full of cash with him to the meeting, just in case the PCs needed payment in advance. The PCs should negotiate carefully over whatever expenses (medical, transportation, etc.) they expect Mr. Upshaw to cover. If they don't specify it in advance, he won't pay for it.

Code Name: Wifebeater intends to snatch Madison out of her school, but the PCs show up at the same time and he decides to observe them instead. He's overjoyed. Adding superheroes to the mix makes this an even higher-profile case. As they move to transport Madison across country, Wifebeater will call the Player Characters to tell them how delighted he is to be working against them.

As the PCs flee across country, Wifebeater will catch up with them and try to make off with the child at least three times.

Madison herself is an amazing brat, cruel and self-centered, accustomed to ordering adults around and threatening them with her father's wrath. If they get her to the Bahamas safely, they find the house is empty of everyone but the servants and security staff. Madison's parents are elsewhere. The little girl insists that she's safe now and that the PCs should go. But just as they do, Wifebeater calls. He has kidnapped Luz Delgado, Madison's nanny. This is the only human being Madison loves—the closest thing she has to a mother. Madison is willing to go meet Wifebeater alone if he gives back Luz. The PCs are going to have to find a way to prevent it.

Stan will probably escape punishment for his involvement in this matter, but he has other problems. Chad barely noticed the interruption with his daughter and isn't slowed down at all. A year later he gets Stan's job and Stan shoots himself.

While the PC is trying to figure out what to do, Wifebeater suddenly gets a chance at being released on a technicality.

3) Who's the Wifebeater Now?

Some months after the PCs have sent Code Name: Wifebeater to prison, he strikes up a correspondence with a woman who is close to one of them. This should be the wife, sister, girlfriend or other close associate of a Player Character who maintains a secret identity. Wifebeater doesn't know their secret identity and he has no idea that the woman in question is in any way connected to one of his enemies. He's writing letters to a number of different women on the outside and it's just a coincidence that she happens to know a PC.

The Player Character stumbles across the letters by accident. It's clear from reading them that Wifebeater's pen pal is excited by the danger of exchanging letters with an incarcerated criminal, that she has never met her correspondent in person and that she doesn't know precisely who he is. But the PC can tell from the writing style that it's Code Name: Wifebeater. There are some specific phrases that only he uses.

Neither one of them has reached the point of being openly romantic, but they're both getting more and more flirtatious as the letters progress. She says that she has written to prisoners before, but that things never went this far.

He's starting to ask her about meeting him when he gets out. What will the PC do? Does it make sense to confront her? How would she react to someone reading her letters?

If she finds out who her correspondent really is, she'll probably break things off—she's thrilled by the danger of what she's doing, but that's a little too much danger for her (I mean, his name is "Wifebeater" for god's sake!). But how could you let her know this without revealing your secret identity?

MISERY



Quote: *"The cosmos is an infected wound in the brain of God. I may be bacteria, but you're pus."*

PL: 14

Real Identity: Unknown (hasn't used his real name in millennia)

Dual Identity: Secret (although he does not maintain a separate "non-super" life)

Group Affiliation: None

Nationality: Egyptian (but doesn't have a valid Citizenship Card)

Height: 5'8"

Weight: 105 pounds

Hair Color: None

Eye Color: Brown

Age: 4,653

Str: 12 (+1) Dex: 16 (+3) Con: 26 (+8) Int: 12 (+1) Wis: 30 (+10) Cha: 30 (+10) Initiative: 8 Attack Bonus: 13 Defense: 12 Toughness Save: 8 Fortitude Save: 10 Reflexes Save: 6 Willpower Save: 14

Skills: Bluff 10 (+20), Intimidate 14 (+24), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 14 (+15), Knowledge (History) 14 (+15), Knowledge (Philosophy and Theology) 10 (+11), Notice 2 (+12), Sense Motive 5 (+15), Stealth 15 (+18)

Feats: Diehard, Distract (Linked to Intimidate), Fascinate (Linked to Bluff), Fearless, Fearsome Presence, Improved Initiative, Sneak Attack, Startle, Taunt, Well-Informed.

Powers: Flight 6 (Maximum Speed: 500 mph), Immunity 22 (Aging, Disease, Illusions, Interaction Skills, Life Support, Poison), Magic 14 (Spells: Emotion Control [Power Feat: Mind Blank; Flaw: Can only cause Despair]; Power Feat: Alternate Powers [Blast, Comprehend (Animals, People, Objects, Plants), ESP (Visual and Auditory), Invisibility (to all senses), Obscure (Visual), Fatigue, Insubstantial (Incorporeal, still vulnerable to Magical attacks), Suffocate, Teleport; Flaw: Limited [Magic is only PL 10 unless Misery is at a sites of human suffering/tragedy, or in a place where such a crisis is presently emerging (so for example, his spells would all be PL 14 if he were standing atop a crumbling dam with a major population center in its path)]), Regeneration 16 (Recovers from being Bruised in one Action, recovers from being Injured or Staggered in one round, recovers from being Disabled in one round, Resurrection; Flaws: Limited [Can't heal damage from blessed or consecrated weapons, only useable if Misery has been present at a scene of carnage within the past 24 hours]), Super-Senses (Magical Awareness, Darkvision), Transfer Constitution 10 (Extras: Area [Shapeable], Range; Flaw: Only works on targets who are Disabled or Dying)

Note: Misery can't use his extra four ranks of Magic without the (nameless) staff he always carries in his right hand. However, if the staff is taken away from him, it instantly teleports back into his hand as a Free Action, so this does not qualify as a Flaw or a Drawback.

Complications: Unspeakable nightmarish abomination who lives to spread pain and

havoc. Loves human suffering and isn't much interested in anything else.

Drawbacks: Weakness (must drain 10 points of life force [Constitution]/day, or suffers cumulative -1 to attack rolls, checks, and Defense; moderate, common, -2 pp).

Weakness (suffers a -1 penalty to Defense in the presence of the ankh, ancient Egyptian symbol of death, minor, uncommon, -2 pp)

Vulnerable (vulnerability to blessed/consecrated weapons of any faith except those dedicated to gods/religions that promote disease, suffering, or tragedy, major, uncommon, -3 pp)

Background and History

The man who would become the embodiment of Misery (nameless here, as even he has forgotten the details of his mortal life), was born in Ancient Egypt, prior to the birth of the prophet Moses or the rise of the Roman Empire. The man became a physician and an occultist, tending to the needs of the royal families of Egypt and even Pharaoh himself; but he did not do so because he wished to cure the ill and care for the dying, nor did he act out of a desire for glory and wealth; no, the man who would become Misery was terrified of death, horrified of what might come after his life on Earth came to an end, and he sought insight into human mortality only in the hope of preventing his own end. Death terrified him so much that he grew to hate life, for life by nature was finite. He learned an occult ritual that allowed him to steal life from those already sick and dying, but while this temporarily granted him more vigor, it did nothing to preserve or extend his life. Gathering his meager courage, he attempted an arcane ritual to summon a demon from the underworld, an emissary from a World Forbidden to Man.

The sinister physician succeeded in the ritual, and called forth a horrific being from some hellish dimension. The wretched man quivered in fear before the thing, but his fear of his own mortality won out, and he offered his soul in exchange for immortality. The evil thing laughed at this, saying the man's soul was already lost, but

that another bargain was possible; if the man would agree to become the embodiment of Misery on Earth he would be granted life everlasting—at a price. He would have to walk the world forever, always in search of scenes where human suffering had occurred on a grand scale. He would extinguish the lives and hopes of those who had survived, feeding his own power as he did so. The alternative was to live out his life as any other mortal, trembling in fear at the thought of death, and expiring in a few short decades. The man had come too far to turn back, and the diabolic bargain was struck; Misery was born.

Misery walked the world for generations, stealing the lives and hopes of others to preserve his own wretched existence. He came to revel in his status as an immortal, as he began to see himself as a god compared to the insects around him whose lives ended in a twinkling—often at his hands. He learned to encourage human apathy and ignorance, as it so often led to human tragedy, which he savored. He was never stronger than when among masses of suffering humanity. Earthquakes, floods, slaughters, plagues—Misery was always nearby, stealing the will to live of those struggling to survive and cultivating the suffering of their loved ones, lapping up tragedy like fine wine. All that was important was that he remained alive and eternal.

He continued to grow in arcane knowledge and eldritch power over the centuries, his only two passions beyond simple survival. Still a wretched coward at heart, Misery hid his existence from the world—though he constantly told himself that the bargain he made had put him beyond death, beyond justice, fear still nagged at him. What if he was discovered by another wizard or sorcerer, by someone with the means and inclination to somehow revoke the pact he made with the Demons of the Outer Dark? His life was all that was precious to him. It was better to remain unknown to the world of men—insignificant beings though they were. He occasionally encountered other supernatural entities that attempted to destroy him, but Misery was always able to overcome them or escape

from their clutches. None proved strong or ruthless enough to put an end to him. And none ever revealed him before the world—perhaps they were not permitted to do so, or simply did not believe mankind was prepared for such knowledge.

Misery's existence was suspected at one time or another by various occult scholars, good-aligned mystics, and the like, but none learned of his true power or purpose, thinking he was simply another evil spirit or demon that had been inadvertently set loose in the world of men. Anyone who came close to learning more about him did not live long enough to share their knowledge with the rest of the world, though a few left cryptic clues about him in long lost tomes or forgotten occult diaries, their authors slain before the secrets they had learned could be seen by others. Misery was scrupulous in his efforts to conceal the evidence of his depredations. Yet in recent years, a few people have come close

Misery stalked the Tsunami ravaged coasts of Southeast Asia, encouraging the looting, slave-taking, suicides, and disease outbreaks that accompanied the disaster. He was finally driven off by the combined efforts of a team of supers native to the area, but even these worthies were unable to destroy him. Unlike most of the heroes who fought Misery in the past, they lived to tell the rest of the world. They didn't know who or what he was, but they got close enough to be able to at least describe him.

The next credible sighting of this spirit of despair was in New Orleans, Louisiana in the days following the flooding of the city. A hero gifted with a magical aura that burned away deceptions and illusions (pick one from your campaign, or else just call him "Dr. Delphi") described an encounter with an "evil entity" that was "somehow sucking the life" away from a bedraggled band of flood survivors.

Several supernaturally powered heroes converged on the Gulf Coast to confront Misery, but he had apparently already deserted the flood plains by the time they assembled. There was a report shortly thereafter of an apparition matching Misery's description being glimpsed by both

Shiites and Sunnis when the Golden Dome in Iraq was destroyed by a terrorist attack. He may well be in Iraq still, which might help explain Baghdad's descent into anarchy. If he is in fact there, his lingering presence may have to be dealt with if the Iraqis are to have any chance of a peaceful future.

U.S. black ops mystics are currently working to ascertain whether the vile creature who was seen at the Golden Dome is indeed still in the Middle East. If so, they are under orders to take any measures necessary to banish Misery from the region.

Powers: Misery is an undying creature sustained through dark occult arts; an accomplished sorcerer, Misery can work a number of terrible effects through his spells. Misery has little real interest in combat, as he seeks above all else to preserve his own existence through feeding on the lives and suffering of others, but if confronted he can be absolutely devastating, hurling bursts of cold azure flame at his foes, stealing away their very breath, and clouding their senses when they attempt to strike back at him. In combat he delights in taunting his foes, vile words dripping off his black tongue. He has nothing but contempt for self-proclaimed heroes, or any else foolish enough to care enough for others to risk their lives standing against him.

He is very difficult to hurt, as he heals even the worst of injuries very quickly, but if he ever does find himself out-matched, he will always chose to flee—he feels no shame in abandoning a fight if it means surviving another day. He has no loyalty to anyone or anything save himself, though he knows that he ultimately owes allegiance to those beings that granted him his status as the embodiment of Misery.

Misery must feed on other humans to preserve his own life, and his powers wane if he does not daily come upon a locale where men and women are struggling against death, disease, pain, and loss. He thinks nothing of those he feeds upon, feeling no remorse whatsoever, as he sees their deaths as contributing to a higher purpose—the continuation of Misery in the world.

Appearance and Demeanor

Misery is irredeemably, inhumanly evil; he was a cold-blooded calculating murderer before his transformation, and he has spent the last three millennia as an embodiment of despair, hopelessness, and death. He sees himself as superior to any mortal being whose life is measured in scant decades, but his own pathological fear of death remains, and he is a wretched, cowardly creature at heart for all his fearsome power.

Misery does not seek open confrontation with other paranormal beings. He prefers to skulk unseen and unknown amongst humanity, fomenting and then feeding off the misery of others with none even aware of his presence. Any hero who does manage to discover and confront Misery will find him a truly insidious foe, as he will stalk the hero's friends and family members, attempting to pick them off one by one to break the hero's spirit before he feeds on the hero's soul.

Adventures With Misery

1) Storm of Sorrows

A gigantic typhoon bears down on Southeast Asia. Singapore is right in its path. This is precisely the kind of natural disaster that Singapore's government has always feared. They try desperately to evacuate into nearby Malaysia, but the Malaysian government won't cooperate. Many, many people may be about to die.

Then things get worse. Thailand sends an aircraft full of scientific gear out to study the storm. It vanishes, and the last images it transmits show something horrible, impossible—a human figure riding on the storm front, gesturing at the camera with malign fury.

Singapore sends a fleet of military helicopters out to the storm, to see if this some kind of supervillain attack. None of the helicopters ever come back. From their last transmissions it is clear that they were fighting something.

If the PCs aren't already on their way to the scene of the impending disaster, the US State Department asks them to go. If the team is unknown to the US government, or isn't on good terms with

them, some older hero whom they trust asks them to get involved.

Misery rides the crest of the typhoon, cackling with evil glee. He makes no attempt to hide from the heroes—in fact, if any of them are using weather-control powers to break up the storm, he seeks them out and attacks first.

If the PCs manage to drive him off, it becomes clear that he isn't creating or controlling the storm—he's just here as a kind of tourist, to enjoy the havoc that it will cause and do his best to maximize the suffering. The PCs may be faced with a difficult choice. Do they pursue Misery? Do they let him go and try to help Singapore? Do they dare to split their forces in the face of such a huge pair of threats?

2) Kingdom of Pain

A tiny West African country (pick one) has lapsed into violent chaos. The central government has completely broken down, the infrastructure has collapsed, the different armed factions have disintegrated into warring bands of marauders. The capitol has become a kind of urban hell on earth—a shattered moonscape of broken buildings and bullet-riddled wreckage.

Of the three factions vying for control of the capitol, the smallest (but most feared) is called the Army of the Black Skull. It is led by Colonel James Musavembie, who has reportedly been getting a little strange since the death of his wife and kids last year. He has tattooed his face like a skull and claims to be in communion with the forces of death. Colonel Musavembie now calls himself the Black Skull. You might think that his obvious craziness might scare people away from his cause, but in fact he has been suddenly growing in strength.

The Black Skull is little-known in the west, despite being a bona-fide arch-villain. The US and NATO don't want to get involved in this conflict and the press isn't paying much attention. The UN is doing what it can on the diplomatic front, other West African nations are talking about sending in a multinational peacekeeping force, but as of yet nothing has been done to stem the violence.

Then an incident occurs that may drag the US into the conflict after all. An American super-heroine called Lady Justice makes a startling public announcement. She claims to have found evidence that some big diamond firms have intentionally caused the present West African crisis. The country that has dissolved into chaos was planning to nationalize its diamond mines, so they made an example out of it. At first her claims go ignored and unheard. Then she disappears and people start openly wondering if the diamond companies decided to make an example out of her, too.

If the PCs haven't already gotten involved, then the US Government asks for their help. They know where Lady Justice is. She was gathering more evidence in West Africa when she got captured by the Army of the Black Skull. They're holding her somewhere under the ruined cathedral in the capital city, doing God-knows-what to her right now. The whole thing is a huge embarrassment.

If they demand that the Black Skull lets her go, the US is sure to get dragged into the conflict. Lady Justice has never been more popular with the American public. Everyone will be clamoring for them to rescue or avenge her. For the sake of the national interest, they can't possibly admit that they know where she is. Could the PCs quietly rescue her from the Black Skull's lair? Their government will make sure they look like heroes for it.

When the PCs arrive in the war-torn capital city, they will have to make their way through the deadly streets to the cathedral, which the Army of the Black Skull has converted into a veritable temple of torment. Enemies and people they have snatched off the street are subjected to vicious abuse under the watchful eyes of the plaster saints—and of Misery. For the Black Skull isn't lying when he says that he's in touch with the forces of darkness. Misery was drawn to this little country's agony. He has become the ally and protector of the Army of the Black Skull, and its leader's confidante. With Misery's help, they can do for the whole country what they've done for the capital, and very likely spread the Black Skull's Kingdom of Pain across much of West

Africa. Unless of course the PCs defeat him right here.

Lady Justice is down in the catacombs, drugged but unhurt. However, in order to rescue her PCs are going to have to fight their way past Misery.

The Black Skull

Str: 34 (+12) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 24 (+7)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus:** 10
Defense: 8 **Toughness Save:** 10
Fortitude Save: 10 **Reflexes Save:** 5
Willpower Save: 10

Skills: Bluff 8 (+11), Intimidate 8 (+11), Knowledge (tactics) 6 (+6), Languages (English, French, Hausa), Survival 9 (+10), Notice 11 (+12), Search 8 (+9)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Chokehold, Connected, Fearless, Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Inspire, Leadership, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Quick-Draw, Startle, Takedown Attack, Tracking

Powers: Device (Weapon [he can pull blades out of his flesh] 3 damage), Regeneration 4 (Recovers from being Injured in a single round), Super-Strength 1 (Maximum Lift: 3 tons)

Equipment: Pair of .45 pistols (4 Damage), Fragmentation Grenades (Damage 5; Extra: Explosion), Smoke Grenades (Visual Obscure, 10 foot Radius), Flash-Bang Grenades (Dazzle 4; Extra: Burst), Satellite Telephone

Description: A hulking, shaven-headed African whose upper torso, neck, and head have been permanently dyed bone-white with an obsidian black skull death mask tattooed across his face. The Black Skull stands nearly six and half feet tall and is physically strong enough to punch a hole through a concrete wall. His big, ivory teeth and prodigious jaw make him look like he could chew threw a two-by-four. Near-psychotic and almost impervious to pain, he stores a variety of knives, razor blades and shards of broken glass in the very flesh of his arms and chest. There's even a hatchet sticking out of him in one place. All the wounds have healed over, but they bleed fresh every time he pulls a blade free. As he uses the blades quite frequently (he relishes the feel of a sharp edge on a victim

and employs his knives on almost a daily basis) rivulets of blood are almost always running down his dark skin. Bare-chested, he wears tan fatigues and hob-nailed black boots that almost another two inches to his already impressive height. He holsters two 45 caliber automatics on his belt, along with their ammo and an array of fragmentation, flash-bang, and smoke grenades. A charm hangs around his neck—he believes that it renders him unkillable (the truth of this has yet to be determined).

Army of the Black Skull

PL: 4

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 14 (+2)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 2 **Attack Bonus:** 4 **Defense:** 4
Toughness Save: 2 **Fortitude Save:** 4
Reflexes Save: 4 **Willpower Save:** 4

Skills: Climb 2 (+4), Intimidate 7 (+8), Knowledge (tactics) 4 (+6), Notice 6 (+7), Profession (Soldier) 4 (+6), Search 3 (+4), Sense Motive 5 (+6), Stealth 5 (+7), Survival 7 (+8)

Feats: Equipment 4 (20 pts. of equipment), Track

Equipment: AK-47 Assault Rifle (Ranged Weapon, 5 damage [Extra: Autofire]),

Description: Clad in whatever clothes they have scavenged and wielding a rag-tag assemblage of equipment, they are as likely to wear clown masks or tuxedos or ballroom gowns as military uniforms. Most have been killing people since they were kids and think death is very funny.

Lady Justice

PL: 10

Str: 20 (+5) **Dex:** 22 (+6) **Con:** 18 (+4)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
Initiative: 10 **Attack Bonus:** 14
Defense: 13 (6 if she is caught flatfooted)
Toughness Save: 8 (4 if she is caught Flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** 8
Reflexes Save: 13 **Willpower Save:** 8

Skills: Acrobatics 12 (+18), Climb 5 (+10), Diplomacy 10 (+14), Escape Artist 10 (+16), Gather Information 9 (+13), Investigate 7 (+11), Notice 10 (+14), Search 8 (+12), Sense Motive 5 (+9), Stealth 8 (+14)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Acrobatic Bluff, All-Out Attack, Assessment, Attractive,

Connected, Contacts, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 3, Endurance, Evasion 2, Fascinate (linked to Diplomacy), Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Throw, Improved Trip, Inspire, Move-By Action, Power Attack, Prone Fighting, Redirect, Sneak Attack, Stunning Attack, Takedown Attack, Weapon Bind

Description: Stunned and Injured at the moment, Lady Justice may not be able to use her formidable skills to help the PCs once they rescue her. If they do manage to get her awake and functioning, they will find that she is a wide-eyed patriot and an unbelievable optimist. She's also something of an uptight prude. Lady Justice sees the world in black and white, or in red white and blue—take your pick. She isn't capable of letting anyone off the hook or cutting anyone any slack. If you have committed a crime, you ought to be punished for it. She's a mesmerising public speaker, incredibly charismatic and magnetic. She may mouth a lot of tired old cliches about justice and the flag, but when she says them, you want to believe them.

VIOLATOR RED



Quote: "I can show you no mercy...if the world is to have a future."

PL: 17

Real Name: Maxwell Magarac

Dual Identity: Unknown in current time-line

Group Affiliation: Former member of the Utopian Imperative

Nationality: Citizen of the United Utopian City-States

Height: 5'11"

Weight: 220 lbs

Hair Color: Bald

Eye Color: Silver-White

Age: Apparent age is youthful (late 20s/early 30s), actual age is 236.

Str: 20 (+5) **Dex:** 20 (+5) **Con:** 20 (+5)

Int: 18 (+4) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 8 (-1)

Initiative: 9 **Attack Bonus:** 16

Defense: 14 **Toughness Save:** 20/7 (without BioSuit)

Fortitude Save: 15 **Reflexes Save:** 10

Willpower Save: 10

Skills: Computers 7 (+11), Disable Device 7

(+11), Intimidate 8 (+7), Knowledge (Physical Science) 5 (+9), Search 6 (+9), Sense Motive 6(+9)

Feats: Assessment, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (on Nuclear Punch), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Second Chance (on failed Willpower saves to resist mental effects), Takedown Attack

Powers: Absorption 5 (Energy; Effect—Boost to any one of his mutant powers, one at a time), Blast 18 (AP: Blast 18 [*Dynamic*]; Extra: Aura; Flaw: Touch range; AP: Blast 18; Extra: Area Effect—explosion; Flaw: Touch range; Create Object [*Dynamic*]; PF: Progression—25 foot cube/rank; AP: Disintegration 9; AP: Gravity Control 18 [*Dynamic*]; AP: Transform—4 pt level, transform human/humanoid targets in various ways; Extra: Continuous; Flaw: Touch), Device 24(53rd Century BioSuit; Hard to Lose; for stats, see below), Density 9 (Effect: +18 Strength, Impervious Protection 4, Immovable 3, Super-Strength 3, Mass x 8 AP: Insubstantial 4), Flight 10 (10,000 mph), Immunity 12 (Aging, Disease, Life Support, Poison), Mind Shield 10, Regeneration 15 (+4 on Recovery checks, Rolls to recover from Injured, Staggered, and/or Disabled condition once/minute, Resurrection—roll to regenerate from death once/day—cannot resurrect if slain with an Electro-Magnetic Pulse or if body being stored in strong EM field, PF: Regrowth), Strike +5 ("Nuclear Punch"; Extra: Penetrating [also applies to Strength], PF: Mighty), Super-Senses 1 (Detect individuals and objects connected to his own time-line) **53rd Century BioSuit:** Comprehend 4 (Languages, can speak as well as listen), Communicate 5 (Radio, 10 Mile Radius), Datalink 6 (Range: 20 miles; Medium: Radio), Enhanced Feat: Quick Change 2, Protection 13, Super-Senses 18 (Extended Sight x100, Extended Hearing x100, Awareness [Extra-dimensional Energies], Blindsight, Darkvision, Detect [Disturbances in the dimensional flow], Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Infravision, Microscopic Vision, Radio, Radius Vision [can see in 360 degrees], Time Sense, Ultravision, X-Ray Vision), Super-Strength 10 (Maximum Lift: 12.5 Thousand Tons; Power Feats: Shockwave, Groundstrike), Teleport 10

(Normal Range: 1,000 feet; Extended Range: 200,000 miles [anywhere within the Moon's orbit]; Power Feats: Change Direction, Change Velocity, Easy; Extras: Accurate)

Complications: Obsessed with preventing his own future from coming to pass, Engages in erratic, obviously psychotic behavior.

Drawbacks: Power Loss (Absorption does not work vs. divine, magical, or psionic energy), Power Loss (Loses Blast array and Flight capabilities if he suffers an Injured, Staggered, or Disabled result from an Electro-Magnetic Pulse), Moderately Vulnerable to powers with the magnetic descriptor; Total points in drawbacks: -6.

Background and History

Maxwell Magarac was born—or will be born—nearly three thousand years from now in the sprawling metropolis of the Eastern Seaboard area of what was once the United States of a possible future timeline. Max was a bright, healthy child, but was born to struggling, working-class parents in a time of government repression, social unrest, and widespread poverty. His future prospects seemed hopelessly bleak. His parents died early in his life, leaving him only their values: compassion, honesty, and responsibility. He grew up quickly, struggling to make a place for himself in a harsh world. For the next fifteen years he eked out an existence as a semi-skilled laborer in Area 77, a run-down section of the sprawling urban center in which he lived. Yet always he dreamed of a better life for himself, a better world for all. Everything changed when he was 27. A terrorist group detonated a small anti-matter bomb in the city-sector where he lived, destroying half the sector and killing several hundred thousand innocent people. Maxwell emerged from the fiery devastation enraged: alive, unharmed, and with more raw power than any other single being on the planet. His mutant powers, suppressed by years of pollution and stress, had finally surfaced. He could now intuitively command electromagnetic, gravitational, and nuclear forces—the forces that guide and shape all matter in the universe. He could increase

his molecular density to become massively strong, heavy, and tough, or could become so insubstantial as to pass through solid matter. He could generate blasts of nuclear energy capable of melting steel. He could soar through air on a stream of charged particles, adapt to any environment, swiftly recover from nearly any wound...even manipulate reality itself on a local scale! With the power now at his command, he could accomplish nearly anything.

Max saw his newfound power as a tremendous gift, one he would share with the entire world. He sought out one of the more socially responsible factions, a small cadre of super-humans and their followers who called themselves the Utopian Imperative. Despite certain radical views, they were considered heroes among the lower social classes, and their efforts at changing the political-social order were largely free of violence. Their leader, The Ideal, was blessed with super-cognitive and creative abilities; he had developed complex theories that could reshape the world into a better, fairer, place. All that the Imperative lacked was the sheer might needed to overcome their enemies. Maxwell provided all the might they would ever need. The Ideal welcomed Maxwell into their ranks, making him a trusted lieutenant. He had a new role and new name: Justifier Blue.

In the next three decades, the Utopian Imperative remade the world. Justifier Blue crushed the dictatorships and criminal factions plaguing the world, and The Ideal's visionary concepts all but eliminated drug abuse, poverty, and unemployment. The Utopian Imperative's ranks swelled with dozens of super-beings, and their social movement won millions of converts. They quickly established themselves as the dominant political authority on Earth. Their policies were implemented across the globe. They now had legions of super-humans, who dedicated themselves to bettering the world. Justifier Blue emerged as the movement's "working-class hero", a supreme powerhouse beloved by the common man. A golden age was quickly established on Earth.

It did not last. Two centuries later, the membership of the Utopian Imperative had grown smug and elitist. The Ideal and the other founding members were long gone. Only Justifier Blue remained from that golden era. The Imperative's new leadership treated normal human beings with contempt; they enriched themselves while oppressing those they governed. On a whim, harsh edicts were issued and mercilessly enforced. Once benevolent, government institutions had become corrupt and self-serving. Poverty and crime soared, cities erupted into chaos; riots, uprisings, and civil wars broke out world-wide. Justifier Blue—who had grown not older but only more powerful—did everything he could to reestablish order. He put down riots and quelled resistance. He did what he could to intercede on behalf of the common people, but he remained loyal to the memories of his old friends, and maintained faith that their heirs would eventually set things right.

His faith was shattered when he arrived on the scene of yet another city-wide riot to find other Imperative members gleefully executing men, women, and even children who had already surrendered. Something inside him shattered. Those he had served were assassins, common killers. They had betrayed everything the Imperative had stood for, everything he had fought to build—and he had helped them do it! Enraged, he killed all the Imperative forces on the scene. He then set out to tear down the very institutions he had once fought so hard to build.

Monumental battles raged across the world, toppling cities and nation-states, as Justifier Blue and scattered bands of freedom fighters fought the might of the Imperative and their technologically-enhanced super-troopers. The conflict teetered back and forth for years, neither side able to score a decisive victory, millions suffering as a result. Edison X, the Imperative's technological genius, came up with a secret weapon he dubbed the Quantum Resonator. The weapon was designed to lock onto Justifier Blue's unique quantum signature; it would generate a sub-atomic vibration that would cancel out his existence—the particles of Justifier Blue's

body would literally evaporate, utterly disintegrating him. Without his power backing them, the freedom fighters would soon fall. Unfortunately, Edison XX had underestimated Maxwell's power. The weapon nearly finished him, but at the last instant, Maxwell instinctively generated a counter vibration, negating the weapon's effect—and destroying every other living being on Earth. The vibration spread throughout the world, turning all organic matter into dust.

When Maxwell finally realized what had happened his mind crumbled. He could not bear the guilt of his actions. He had set out to save the world and instead he had ended it. He thought to somehow end his own life, but he desperately clung to hope; there had to be a way to repair it all. Using mad logic, he found a way. If the Imperative had never come to power the world would never have ended. If he had never joined the Imperative they would never have gained power. If he never had been born he would never have joined the Imperative. He had to prevent his own existence from ever coming to pass.

Maxwell had become a minor scholar over the years, but was by no means a scientist; he knew only the rudiments of time travel theory. All he did know was that some scientists had speculated the past was mutable, that the present could be altered by traveling far enough back in time. These scientists believed that though there were many alternate time-lines, there were not an infinite number of them; if the correct time-line could be identified, it could theoretically be altered. The further back in the past of the time-line one went, the greater the chance that the future could be changed—or so the theory held. This had never actually been attempted—no power source was great enough—but it was Maxwell's only hope. Though weakened by the Imperative's terrible Quantum Resonator weapon, he would provide the power source himself. Raiding technology from a time-travel research lab, he jury-rigged a harness, which he hoped would allow him to remain on the "correct" path in time. He then jumped back as far as he could before he

felt the strain would tear him apart, roughly three thousand years, arriving in the late 20th century. Unfortunately, the time harness was destroyed, and Max's powers were even further diminished, reducing him to a pale shadow of his near-omnipotent self. Max had a new mission now and a new identity as well. Justifier Blue had been a hero, had accomplished fantastic deeds— but had destroyed his own world. Now he would play the villain and commit terrible deeds, but save his world. He adopted a new name to fit his new role: Violator Red.

Appearance and Demeanor

Violator Red is a very fit looking, muscular man of medium height. He appears to be in his late twenties or early thirties (he is actually over two hundred years old, though he does not physically age). The Quantum Resonator weapon that nearly killed him changed the way his body reflects light, giving him an odd, duo-chromatic black-and-white appearance.

His bio-suit is blood-red in color, composed of gleaming metallic cloth. A black 'V' symbol adorns the chest piece, set against a silver-blue inverted triangle. The suit's gloves, boots, neck piece are black. Violator Red's full face mask is red, with a 'V' shaped opening revealing only his eyes, the bridge of his nose, and a slit of his mouth.

Violator Red is unhinged by the role he played in his world's destruction. He is obsessed with preventing his own future from arising. The fact that this is only remotely possible even in theory does not deter him; this is his opportunity to redeem himself, to prevent the deaths of billions. Subconsciously he realizes it is overwhelmingly likely that either the past is immutable, making his efforts are meaningless, or that there are so many parallel time lines— past and future— that he almost certainly has not reached the right one. Subconsciously knowing that his effort is futile only feeds his desperation, spurring him onward. He spends almost all his time tracking down people and technologies that potentially connected to his own future time-line. The “dangerous” technologies he simply destroys, going so far as to purge any existing records or relevant research.

Human beings are another matter; Violator Red prefers to refrain from outright murder if possible, instead using his Quantum Flux power to either change them or imprison them in some way, altering the course of their lives so that they are no longer any potential threat to the future. Unfortunately, this often involves assaulting, disabling, or maiming human beings in ways that range from the relatively harmless to the bizarre to the horrific. In some cases however— especially when dealing with other super-humans— he feels he has no choice but to kill. If he believes that the individual must be slain to remove the potential threat it poses, or if the authorities put up too much resistance in protecting the target, if the information he has been able to glean is not precise enough, or is too likely to escape... Violator Red regrets murdering innocent people, and does so as mercifully as possible, but he believes all his actions are justified to avert the a far greater tragedy in the future. There is no act he cannot rationalize if necessary—even mass murder is not beyond him.

At the same time, he retains some of the values that once made him a hero. He steals advanced technologies, loots bank vaults, and commits acts of mayhem, but only to further his mission. His personal needs are almost non-existent, and he anonymously donates any excess funds garnered from his thefts to charity. He will respond to natural disasters, save innocent people from harm, and (violently) take down super-villains, but only so long as these things do not interfere with his mission. Those who do not know his motivations will view his actions as inexplicable and likely psychotic —he might fight fiercely to protect a city from destruction by a notorious super-villain, then turn and savagely assault or murder a completely helpless, innocent person.

Violator Red has no fear of confrontation; he will take on anyone or anything that attempts to prevent him from achieving his goals. He correctly believes that even in his current, badly weakened state he is more than a match for nearly anyone else on Earth...and, besides, as time passes he is slowly recovering his lost

energies, becoming stronger by the month. If he was captured no 21st century prison could long contain him. Despite this, he prefers to act quietly and with a minimum of violence. He identifies his probable targets via his powers and technology, and then acts to neutralize them as quickly as possible.

Adventures With Violator Red

The Fate of the World Eventually Hangs in the Balance



Violator Red falls through the roof of the PCs' headquarters (or if that would annoy your players too much, he crashes to the ground outside). He's injured and he begs them for help. Right now, he explains, at this very moment, a rogue scientists is working on a project that will destroy the entire world. Violator Red has come back in time from the 53rd Century to warn humanity, he explains, and stop the disaster from happening.

Dr. Oliver Audoun is working in secret on a project that endangers all of human history. He wouldn't listen to reason, so Violator Red had no choice but to stop his experiments by force. Dr. Audoun's superhuman henchmen came to his aid, and clobbered V-Red pretty badly. They evacuated the Doctor to some other facility and they're guarding him every second. It's starting to look like Violator Red can't do this alone—can the PCs help him save the world?

If they agree to follow him, he takes them to the headquarters of another superhero team. Some great battle has happened here recently—wreckage is everywhere. Violator Red wants the PCs to

divert the attention of the other team, while he makes his way into their base and puts a stop to the fiendish Dr. Audoun's experiment.

The Player Characters might or might not agree to participate—it has little effect on the outcome of the adventure. Whatever they decide, the other team emerges from their headquarters and attempts to reason with the PCs. All of them are injured, but they are grimly prepared to hold their ground.

Here is the other team's version of the story. Oliver Audoun is an inventor who has been working part time for the Department of Defense on a research grant. He has come up with a new, faster way to grow the crystals that are used in making electron microscopes. He rented lab space in a warehouse and hired a small team of assistants to see if they could implement the new technique on a commercial scale. Then Violator Red showed up and threatened to kill them all if they didn't suspend their research and destroy their files. In a panic, Dr. Audoun called his contacts at the Dept of Defense, who asked the superhero team the PCs are now facing to keep the Doctor safe.

Violator Red pounced on them while they were trying to get Dr. Audoun to safety. He hurt them really badly, but they aren't going to let an innocent man die. The poor old doctor is terrified. He survived coups and purges back home in his native Sierra Leone before escaping to the US and this kind of violence is horribly upsetting to him. Can't the PCs just leave him in peace? His work has no practical military applications.

If confronted with these facts, Violator Red sadly explains that the crystal-growth technique that Audoun is pioneering has other uses. In a few thousand years it will be the cornerstone of the technology that will be used to destroy the world—to make it unlivable anyway. To make it into the kind of world that he ultimately had to destroy himself because it had become irredeemable. Won't the PCs help him keep himself from one day annihilating the world? If they will, then Dr. Audoun and his evil

work must be destroyed. That's the first step, anyway.

Presumably the PCs won't show any enthusiasm for this plan. So Violator Red explains that the first time he attacked this place it became clear to him that the super-team which defends it would lay down their lives rather than surrender. He had hoped that the PCs could distract them for long enough for him to do what has to be done here, so he wouldn't have to kill them all. But now he can see that was a naïve hope. He supposes he'll have to kill all the PCs, too.

Foe of Tomorrow, Friend of Today



Los Angeles is shaken by one of the worst earthquakes in its history. Dozens of heroes flock to the wounded metropolis to see if they can help. If your Player Characters aren't civic-minded enough to join them, then hint to them that Violator Red has been seen in the vicinity. Could this be their chance to catch one of the world's most dangerous villains?

LA is a huge megalopolis, and the heroes who have come to its aid are spread thinly across the immense sprawl. The PCs are the only heroes nearby when one of the downtown skyscrapers (yes, LA really does

have them) begins to wobble alarmingly in the grip of an aftershock. The mighty building starts to topple, when suddenly, who should appear but Violator Red! Like a crimson bolt from the blue he comes, more powerful than a nuclear meltdown, able to crush tall buildings full of screaming people in a single blow, faster than the speed of death itself.

"Look!" some poor terrified bystander screams "up in the sky!"

"It's a terrorist attack!" someone cries.

"It's a thermonuclear blast!"

Someone else shrieks.

"No," a third person moans in hopeless despair "It's worse." They fall to their knees weeping in horror and dread.

But what is this? The Last Son of Tomorrow is not here to kill anyone. He flies up to the collapsing tower and struggles with all his inhuman might to hold it upright. Catching sight of our heroes, he cries out to them: *"Help me! Skyscraper... Too huge! Too immense... can't... hold... on... much... longer!"*

What will our heroes do? Do they come to his aid? Do they seize this opportunity to strike down their hated foe while all his strength is in use, and then blame the ensuing disaster on him? Will they notice in time that nearly a dozen different people are filming this encounter? Who can stop this titanic toppling tower of terror?! Tune in next time, true believers!

THE ORDO ULTIMA

Overview: The arch-villain who calls himself “Professor Purgatory” has plagued the world for nearly a century. He spends his time studying dangerous occult secrets, looking for ways to elevate himself to godhood and inflicting gruesome punishments on anyone he thinks is a “sinner.” He’s one of the most dangerous men alive. In fact, some observers think that the only reason he has never conquered the world is because he doesn’t want to. He’s more interested in inflicting vicious punishments on people who offend him and on trying to get into heaven. He says that he’s God’s messenger on Earth, although his sadistic behavior and pathological narcissism suggest otherwise.

The Professor went into seclusion decades ago. Everyone assumed he was dead. Now he’s back and he has gathered around him a team of supervillains that he calls the Ordo Ultima. Some are fellow self-appointed moral crusaders, others are the fruits of his twisted medical experiments and others are strange entities he met while wandering distant dimensions.

What does the Ordo Ultima intend for mankind? No one yet knows, but it’s sure to be nothing good.

Membership: Professor Purgatory (a crazed arch-villain convinced of his own divinity), Sister Splendor (the Professor’s lunatic fundamentalist sidekick), The Penitent (a lost soul who wanders the world in an indestructible suit of armor, spreading havoc and woe), Cryptic Star (a former superhero who now has to transfer his mind and powers into a never-ending string of fresh bodies to keep from burning out), The Rage Angels (a pair of feral, winged, gruesome female atrocities, spawned by the Professor’s insane experiments), Regiment (former Chinese “Super-Patriotic Soldier of

the People”, now reduced to being the Professor’s hapless minion), the Cretin (a mentally-challenged former hero, trapped in the body of a tiny plastic action figure), The Out-Warder (weird space-warping visitor from another dimension—is it friend or foe?), Sister Tranquility (the blissful, brain-damaged mistress of the martial arts, who goes into battle with an eyeless hood over her head and fights by touch alone), and X’Hort the Converted (a monstrous alien overlord who the Professor has converted to his own brand of fundamentalist Christianity).

Organization: Professor Purgatory is the unquestioned leader of the group—the Professor believes himself to be an arch-angel manifested on Earth, after all. But the Professor only calls all his followers together to carry out especially important missions—he is often too involved pursuing his own esoteric plans and conducting bizarre occult experiments to concern himself with their day-to-day activities. He gathers his followers together when his plans require the acquisition of difficult, dangerous to obtain materials, when he feels the urge to launch an assault against some particularly formidable group or institution, or if something has happened that so outrages him that a massive display of force is required.

He expects unquestioning obedience and usually gets it—Sister Splendor needs his intellect and power behind her to distinguish her from all the other superhuman psychotics running loose in the world, the Penitent is too ashamed and frightened to disobey, and X’Hort is a devout believer. The Rage Angels and Regiment (if you choose to use them) are essentially Prof. Purgatory’s creations, crafted through occult surgery. The Rage Angels are wild and

willful, but the Professor can always lash his "pets" into submission. Regiment might occasionally rebel—he still retains a degree of intellect—but the Professor might resort to coercive techniques such as implanting electrodes in Regiment's brain that shock him whenever he disobeys; This could apply even if you replace Regiment with a genetic knock-off—maybe call it Legion—that doesn't have the "ex-Chinese Super-Soldier" background.

Sister Splendor serves as second-in-command and disciplinarian; she makes certain X'Hort, the other Borderers (if you retain them as the Prof's chief minions), the Penitent, and any other henchmen/hirelings carry out his orders to the letter. She actually has more involvement in their doings than the Professor himself, and may dispatch them on missions of her own, so long as she does nothing to compromise their future usefulness to Professor Purgatory. Sister Splendor secretly doubts the Professor's divinity, but she is wise enough to keep mum. He serves as her mentor, after all, and she cannot deny the superiority of his sheer might and intelligence. Besides, serving as his good right arm affords her access to all the resources he commands. In her off-time, Sister Splendor continues her private crusade against "sinners", taking twisted glee in inflicting mutilation, pain, and loss to those she deems deserving of such. She often engages in petty, cruel ploys, such as posting "alternative lifestyles-type ads in newspaper personals, then meting out agony to those that respond. She keeps a small group of victims she has transformed through her "celestial touch", sometimes tormenting them, sometimes dispatching them to perform various tasks. The Sister is the most "normal" of Professor Purgatory's followers, the most likely to be involved in missions where discretion is required. She can still "go undercover" as a normal human being—her rather ordinary, "harmless middle-aged woman" appearance makes her almost ideal for such tasks. Sister Splendor still retains the clairvoyant abilities of her youth, and so also serves as Professor Purgatory's spy and scout.

X'Hort spends most of his time attending to the Professor—he sees himself as the Professor's bodyguard and aide-de-camp—but still serves as a leader for his Borderer tribe. Consequently, he might lead bands of his kinsmen in raids against banks, farms, trains, and so forth—anything necessary to gather resources for his race. Unlike most other Borderers, he has a degree of intellectual curiosity, and is especially fascinated by fantasy entertainment—anything from children's television to Spielberg movies. He might kidnap actors, writers, or other entertainers simply because he wants to hear more of their wonderful stories. Professor Purgatory also sends X'Hort out on various errands that require little more than brute force, dispatching him to assault or brutalize "those that transgress against societal mores", steal occult or scientific materials, or take out an individual enemy of the Professor.

The Penitent spends his time shambling about aimlessly, a lost soul if ever there was one. His appearance forces him to hide among the most downtrodden, destitute elements of society, where he makes pitiful attempts to fit in, posing as just another beggar or homeless drifter. He uses whatever funds he has to lurk in smoke-filled bars, sipping endless at a single bottle of beer (the armor's face-plate keeps him from drinking more than a tiny drop at a time), adult theaters, dive strip clubs, and so on. Eventually he becomes terrified that the Professor knows what he has been doing, at which point he either finds an abandoned building to hide in, curling up in a fetal position—or goes berserk, destroying bars, adult book stores, video game parlors and entire low-rent neighborhoods to "redeem" himself. The Penitent is used by Professor Purgatory as a living weapon of mass destruction—the Penitent has the raw power to take on—and take out—entire super-teams. The Wishing Man armor makes him nearly impregnable to harm, he can adopt whatever abilities he needs to defeat a foe, and the magic still contained in the armor can unleash torrents of destruction. The unpredictability of his powers and his chaotic mental state make

him unsuitable for any sort of mission that requires self-control or subtlety.

The Rage Angels are almost at the level of beasts or monsters—they are generally not suited for much more than engaging in sheer mayhem, at the Professor's direction or otherwise.

Alternately, the Professor might discover a means of allowing one or more Rage Angels to temporarily assume a more human guise, appearing as beautiful, lascivious women; he would then use them to seduce his enemies, destroying his foes through their own carnal lusts. They would serve almost like the diabolic Succubi of legend.

Regiment/Legion would be the least trust-worthy of the Professor's operatives, psychologically or electronically manipulated into obeying. Regiment is very versatile—his appearance makes him unable to blend in to society, but his relatively high intelligence, skills, and odd powers (anatomical separation, ability to dissolve into liquid, possibly limited duplication) make him very good at stealth work, while he also has the muscle to take on all but the toughest of superhumans.

The Borderers are nominally loyal to the Professor and his aims for the most part—a number have pledged their allegiance out of respect for what the Purgatory has done for their race, but most act only to preserve their home (*The Paradise Delayed*) and their lives. Unfortunately, their interests are tied to those of Professor Purgatory, so they usually have little choice but to go along with his aims.

Other followers could exist, of course; Professor Purgatory might well have established a cult of devotees to his cause, otherwise ordinary people who have bought into his "moral crusader" persona, created other followers through scientific or supernatural rituals, or made compacts with other super-villains. As we established in *Promise of Purgatory*, the Professor has a penchant for making promises, offering those individuals open to his powers of persuasion their heart's desire. He will only deal with those he believes are not irredeemable—no serial killer or psychopaths (he doesn't recognize Sister Splendor for

what she is); just use your judgment as to what villains (if any) you might want to have him working with from *The Bad Guys*, *13 Shades of Darkness*, and/or *More Bad Guys*.

Adventures With the Ordo Ultima

1) Catch a Falling Star

The PCs are called to the scene of a bank robbery, where a gang of hoodlums dressed as Disney characters is preparing to shoot it out with the police. The "Magic Kingdom" gang fall easily enough to the PCs—they don't have superpowers, just funny masks.

As a crowd gathers to cheer them on, a small, nervous middle aged man carrying a bunch of grocery bags steps forward to have a word with the PCs. He's Dr. Akbar Rabin, a physician from Pakistan. He thinks he's a dead man already, he tells the PCs.

Dr. Rabin lives in a run-down working class area near the airport. Two weeks ago, an Italian street gang called the Coronets brought him a wounded supervillain who fell out of the sky onto their turf. They want him to tend the wounded villain's injuries. Dr. Rabin doesn't know who his patient is (it's Cryptic Star) but he's sure that if the Coronets say he's a supervillain then he is one.

For the past two weeks Cryptic Star has been getting stronger. He's conscious much of the time and he can speak a little, now. The first thing he said to Dr. Rabin was: "Tell anyone I'm here, and I'll kill you."

The Doctor is pretty sure that he's going to get killed anyway, just as soon as his patient no longer needs his help. He doesn't dare go to the authorities. He's in this country illegally and his brother is a wanted Muslim extremist. God knows what the Department of Homeland Security might do to him. (the answer to that question is entirely up to the GM). Anyway the Coronets barely let him out of their sight. He was on his way to buy more groceries for his patient when he saw the PCs foil that robbery and he couldn't resist the impulse to ask them for help, even though he thinks it has most likely doomed him.

Cryptic Star is relatively easy to apprehend in his wounded state and the Coronets are no real threat to a group of PL 10 superheroes. It's after they've captured him that things get dangerous. The city tries to keep Cryptic Star under guard in a hospital. The feds want him immediately moved to one of their super-prisons. The city government refuses—these arrangements have been adequate for captive supervillains before. Of course, they've never imprisoned anyone who was a member of a group as powerful as the Ordo Ultima, either. To help soothe the feds' fears, they agree to let the very heroes who captured the Cryptic Star guard his hospital bed. Alas, not only are the hospital's security arrangements woefully inadequate for a supervillain menace of this magnitude, but by keeping him in a hospital, they have provided the Ordo Ultima with a whole building full of potential hostages.

Let the PCs realize all this, and then sweat as the minutes tick by. At any moment, the attack could come from any direction. And it is coming. In fact Professor Purgatory will come in person, this time.

2) Why I Hate Mondays

Early one morning, just as rush hour is getting underway, a downtown skyscraper suddenly shifts on its foundations and starts to collapse. As people start to panic and the city's rescue services wonder what they could possibly do about the crisis, the building stabilizes, uneasily. The ground floor has crumpled and the upper floors are leaning at a crazy angle. The rest of the building could give way at any time.

There are injured people inside the building, others are trying desperately to evacuate. If the building falls lengthwise, it could knock down other skyscrapers and cause widespread loss of life in the city's center.

To complicate matters, the Ordo Ultima appear out of nowhere and announce that they are here to deal with the crisis. They won't let any rescue crews or other superheroes near the site and there are conflicting reports as to whether they are helping people evacuate or preventing them

from getting out (in fact they are doing neither). What are the PCs going to do about his?

Here's what's really going on.

Earlier this morning, before dawn, the Penitent came stumbling downtown in one of his mindless rages, with Professor Purgatory in hot pursuit. The Professor tried to swoop down on the Penitent and snatch him away, but got punched through a skyscraper for his pains. The Professor is now trapped beneath hundreds of tons of rubble on the building's ground floor. His team has arrived to dig him out. They don't care about anything else and if they keep digging at the skyscraper the way they are doing it now, the whole building will come crashing down in less than an hour, and it will take the building next door with it.

If the PCs study the situation, they can find a number of clues to indicate what actually happened. The Penitent was spotted near the city center late last night. The damage to the building seems to indicate that something relatively small struck it with amazing force. The Ordo Ultima seem to be digging the ground floor out while ignoring anything else.

In order to prevent a disaster, the PCs are going to have to fight them, without collapsing the weakened building themselves. And at any moment the GM can decide that Professor Purgatory himself rises out of the rubble.

the cretin



Quote: "I'm big now and I can beat you up. And if you're stronger than me I'll just get an even bigger body to beat you up."

PL: 8

Real Identity: Lionel St. James/ Charlie Morrison

Dual Identity: Secret (uses the alias "Charlie Jamieson")

Group Affiliation: The Ordo Ultima

Nationality: British/American

Height: 5'9"

Weight: 325 pounds

Hair Color: Brown

Eye Color: Blue

Age: Charlie Morrison is 30, Lionel St. James is 54

The Cretin (in his own body)

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** -
Int: 6 (-4) **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 8 (-1)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 10
Defense: 11
Toughness Save: 7 (2 without armor)
Fortitude Save: n/a **Reflexes Save:** 5
Willpower Save: 0

Skills: Climb 8 (+8), Stealth 4 (+15)

Feats: Evasion 2, Hide in Plain Sight, Improved Defense, Improved Trip, Sneak Attack 2

Powers: Device (Miniature Suit of Armor: Protection 5; Drain Willpower Save 5 [Extra: Subtle]) Immunity 30 (all Fortitude effects), Possession 12 (Flaw: reduced range [touch]), Protection 7, Shrinking 8 (Size: Tiny; Attack/Defense Modifier: +2; Grapple Modifier -8; Stealth Modifier +8; Intimidation Modifier -4; Flaw: Permanent), Telepathy 8 (Maximum Range: 2,000 Miles; Extra: Dimensional)

Complications: Silly and childlike, comprehends almost nothing.

The Cretin (in the Vitruvian Man's body)

Str: 24 (+7) **Dex:** 8 (-1) **Con:** 24 (+7)
Int: 6 (-4) **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 8 (-1)
Initiative: -1 **Attack Bonus:** 6
Defense: 5
Toughness Save: 7 (6 Kinetic Absorption)
Fortitude Save: 8 **Reflexes Save:** -1
Willpower Save: -1

Feats: Interpose

Powers: Absorption (Physical Attacks) 6 (Absorbed Energy Converted to Boost, which he uses to fuel his Super-Strength), Immovable 8, Super-Strength 3 (Maximum Lift: 1 ton, Power Feats: Alternate Power [Leaping], Groundstrike, Shockwave)

Complications: Silly and childish, gluttonous and incapable of controlling himself.

Background and History

The simple-minded being now known as the Cretin was once the British superhero Meta-Maestro, and a small-time American super-criminal called the Vitruvian Man.

The Meta-Maestro was Lionel St. James, a public school teacher and part-time music critic in London. Lionel had inherited the psychic powers of bio-kinesis and telepathy from his parents, the Golden Age English heroes The Union Lad and Faerie Figment, but his power levels far exceeded theirs. His mastery over biological matter made him one of Britain's most formidable metahuman operatives—while his courage and valor made him one of the most popular. Lionel was a genuinely decent man, honest, kind, and forgiving to a fault. A committed Christian, he strived to live up to the tenets of his faith, though he fell short in some ways (Lionel was gluttonous and physically lazy, and he depended on his powers to maintain his physical fitness). Like his parents, he used his paranormal abilities in the service of Her Majesty's Secret Service to defend crown and country, but as one of his nation's premier heroes he was often called upon to cooperate with other European or even Asian heroes against villains that posed pan-national threats.

One such menace was Dr. Oni, a hideous figure from some dark unknown continuum that took the form of a legendary Japanese demon. Dr. Oni showed up on Earth from time to time to play nasty, unpleasant games with the world's champions, challenging them to defeat him; so long as they played by the "rules" he was content to concede them the victory and retire to his own abode...until the next time.

This went on until 1975 when the anarchist super-group Nation Breaker "cheated" by using a long forgotten banishing ritual to cast Oni out of the mortal plane. Dr. Oni wasn't able to return for five years, but when he came back it was with a vengeance. Oni recruited a host of villains, each of who had chaos or disaster related powers—and cranked them all up ten-fold. The 12 Avatars of Destruction would have brought about apocalypse if an international coalition of heroes and villains hadn't banded together to defeat them.

Professor Purgatory was recruited into this effort and battled alongside the Meta-Maestro, Johnny Bull III, Kobold Blue, The Hooligan, and D'Artagnan against

Lebensraum, Infernus, and Pestilence. During the battle the Professor was impressed by the Maestro's bravery and nobility, but sensed a fatal weakness in the young man. This was confirmed near the end of the conflict. Pestilence had been brought down and the others were all dead, leaving only the Professor, Meta-Maestro, and Infernus. The Meta-Maestro used his powers to induce a cardiovascular event, hitting the walking holocaust with a stroke. The Professor tried to deliver a coup de grace, but was prevented from doing so by the Maestro, who argued that mercy be shown to a defeated foe. As they argued, Infernus revived and flash-burned the young Brit, causing third-degree burns over 90% of the Maestro's body. Prof. Purgatory crushed the psychopathic fire-caster's skull a second later but it was too late.

Feeling sorrow for the fallen hero, Purgatory took the Maestro's charred body back to the Prof.'s laboratory. He discovered a faint flicker of life in the ravaged remains, but try as he might, he could not induce the Maestro's body to regenerate itself. Finally he hit upon a mad plan. The Prof. artificially manipulated the burned man's powers, using the hero's own bio-kinesis to form a tiny homunculus from the Maestro's own tissues. He then downloaded the Maestro's consciousness into the miniscule figure...prayed he was successful...and awaited the results.

The duplicate's tiny brain could not fully accommodate the Maestro's mind. The new Maestro had much of his personality intact, a vague set of his old memories, but the intellectual capacity of an eight-year old. Most of his powers were gone. Though he could still send and receive thoughts over great distances (and even between dimensions) he could no longer read minds or project mental-energy bolts. His bio-kinetic abilities were terribly diminished, reduced to mere parlor tricks. He did evidence one new power—he could override the nervous systems of other living things via touch, "melding" with their flesh and essentially taking over their bodies.

The child-like creature recognized Purgatory as his father and savior, displaying an almost pathetic affection for

the Prof. Seeing some potential in the little man, the Prof. re-conditioned the Maestro, psychologically immersing the child-like being in the Professor's own twisted version of Monotheism until the tiny fellow accepted it as gospel. The Prof. re-christened him "The Cretin", due both to his low IQ and the ancient term for "Little Christian". The Cretin occasionally did spy and reconnaissance work but mostly the Professor kept him around as a pet. Eventually a stroke of fortune provided the Cretin with a regular-size form to call his own.

The Vitruvian ("Classically Perfect") Man was small-time hired muscle for criminal organizations and more major villains. Despite his grandiose name, his kinetic-energy based powers functioned at a minor level. He never would have attracted Sister Splendor's attention—except that in his secret identity as Charlie Morrison he was a con man who used his stunning good looks to charm vulnerable women and bilk them out of cash, credit cards, and gifts before dumping them. He was every bit as handsome and well-built as the term "vitruvian" implied, and had little problem attracting seducing wealthy but older and/or unattractive women. Sister Splendor stalked Charlie for a few weeks, learning his haunts and habits. She then began loitering about a few of the bars he frequented, taking care to wear the designer clothes and flashy jewelry that should have drawn his attention—but it never did. Unfortunately, Charlie already had all the money he needed at the time and was smitten with a hot young thing named Mandy anyway. Truth to tell, he and Mandy were falling in love—Charlie had never felt real love before. Mandy was beautiful, sweet, a little naïve but also with a wild side. He was a different person around her, and was seriously thinking of going straight and settling down. He figured he could still make easy money as a male model or a stunt man if it came to that. He knew Mandy just wouldn't understand about the super-powered henchman thing.

Increasingly frustrated, the Sister finally approached Charlie directly, asking for his "special services". He sneered and

turned her down ("Drop twenty pounds and twenty years or get lost, you rich old bag"). Poor Charlie soon was on the *Paradise Delayed*, stripped naked and pleading for mercy as Sister Splendor recited a list of his crimes to Professor Purgatory.

Sister Splendor volunteered to oversee the Vitruvian Man's ordeal, explaining to Professor Purgatory that it was only fitting that a woman deliver his punishment, as he had preyed upon vulnerable women. The Professor agreed with a shrug of his armored shoulders, already having lost interest in the matter. Left to her own devices, Sister Splendor gleefully devised an especially sadistic punishment for the hapless villain. Under her "tender ministrations" the Vitruvian Man was forced to undergo six months of drug treatments and cosmetic surgeries to strip away his beauty. His mane of hair fell out in clumps, his toned physique softened and swelled with flab; his legs were shortened and bowed outward. The Sister checked on him weekly, chortling over his diminishing height, expanding gut and sagging muscles. Soon he was a balding, waddling, rotund caricature of his former self.

Sister Splendor arrived one day to taunt him, showing him his reflection in a full-length mirror and telling him she would release him soon—and personally put him to work as a comic relief act for bachelorette parties. Screaming in anguish, he summoned the strength to snap his bonds, and went for the Sister's throat. Two Borderer guards wrestled him to the floor, but he kept struggling—until inactivity and his new girth caused a massive coronary. When she realized what had happened, Sister Splendor rushed the ex-Vitruvian Man to the infirmary—the Professor would be terribly cross with her for an unsanctioned death. She got his heart beating again but Charlie had severe brain damage from lack of oxygen. His involuntary functions were intact but he showed no signs of higher thought. The Professor examined him and determined Charlie was unlikely to ever recover consciousness. He was indeed furious with the Sister. Charlie had been a sinner, but his crimes had not warranted consignment to a living death. The Sister

spent the next six months scrubbing the wounds of injured Borderers and cleaning lab specimen cages; she figured it had been worth it. She would never admit she had craved the embrace of the Vitruvian Man's once delicious physique.

Deciding to salvage something positive from the sad affair, Professor Purgatory installed a pacemaker in the Vitruvian Man's chest, to ensure that the badly overweight body did not once again succumb to cardiovascular disease. The Cretin was then given the Vitruvian Man's apparently vacant body as a more or less permanent residence, a full sized frame he could call his own. This would make the Cretin much more versatile and useful. As the Vitruvian Man no longer had a conscious mind, there was no risk that the Cretin's control would be eventually overridden. Despite the shabby condition of his new "housing", the Cretin was overjoyed to have a "big person's" body to call his very own. Having the Vitruvian Man's body made the Cretin a much more useful servant for the Professor.

What happened to Charlie Morrison's girlfriend Mandy is up to the GM; Sister Splendor may have ignored her entirely, turned her into one of her "flock" with her "celestial touch", or treated poor Mandy to some sort of "reverse-makeover" like she gave her Charlie and then dumped her back home, ugly and bereft.

Appearance and Demeanor

The Cretin's "real" body is a three and a half inch tall version of Lionel St. John, the former Meta-Maestro. He appears to be about thirty years of age, slim and good-looking, with slightly-receding brown hair and brown eyes. He is entirely normal except for his size. He is typically dressed in some sort of simple cloth garment cut down to his proportions. The Cretin has no vanity or sense of fashion, so wears whatever is available to preserve his modesty. He spends most of his time fused with the mindless husk of the Vitruvian Man, guiding Charlie Morrison's empty body. This allows him to interact "normally" with society. As "Charlie Jamieson" he lives in the same brownstone as Sister Tranquility and he

works alongside her cleaning offices and as a part-time dock worker, packing boxes; he is viewed by others as a typical mentally challenged adult. He remains an easy going, gentle person, never harming anyone unless ordered to do so by Professor Purgatory. He is the least angry, least violent of the Prof's followers and is rarely ordered to perform the types of horrific acts the others commit on a regular basis. Although he will ultimately do whatever the Prof. tells him to, Prof. Purgatory actually has a soft spot for him and will not order the Cretin to murder or torture anyone. Because both he and Sister Tranquility require supervision, they are frequently checked up on by Sister Splendor, Cryptic Star (who resents the duty), or even the Out-Warder. Their brownstone appears normal to outsiders, but actually contains several hi-tech and magical security systems.

As noted, some of the Meta-Maestro's persona survives intact in the Cretin, including a few of his bad habits. While he is content to perform undemanding work alongside Sister Tranquility in their "secret identities", his aversion to exercise and proper eating remain. He spends much of his free time as a couch potato, watching TV ("SpongeBob Squarepants" is his favorite—he identifies with Patrick), playing video games, and eating Ben and Jerry's Chunky Monkey ice cream out of the container. As a result, his waistline has continued to grow. Professor Purgatory supplies him with regular doses of magical elixirs to keep diabetes and hypertension at bay, and semi-regularly forces him to exercise on a treadmill to keep him from getting too fat ("You know our rules, Cretin—no watching Cartoon Network until you lose two pounds and are under 325 again"). The Cretin whines and complains the whole time, but manages to get through it.

In his full-size form, while running the Vitruvian Man's old body, the Cretin has a slight degree of superhuman strength, is impervious to bullets and stabbing weapons, and can plant himself on the ground, becoming very difficult to budge. The ex-Vitruvian Man's blubbery physique still retains its ability to redirect kinetic energy, absorbing impact damage to fuel his abilities:

great leaps, earth-shaking stomps (whenever he throws a tantrum) and small-scale shockwaves when he slaps his hands together. These abilities rank relatively low on the super-villain power scale, and the Cretin is only a match for the weakest heroes in straight-up combat. While his short, tubby body is still superhumanly strong and resilient, it is also clumsy and gets winded easily. He is little more than back-up muscle for the team in his full-size state, though his semi-imperviousness to harm does allow him to run interference for the more fragile teammates. The Cretin often abandons his bigger body and tries to take possession of a more potent foe in combat, using his tiny size to sneak up on a target and make his move. When he does so, his larger body simply slumps in a heap to the ground, drooling and motionless. In either guise, he retains his telepathic prowess, enabling him to broadcast the Prof.'s orders and keep the whole team in communication with each other.

When called into action, the Cretin often dons a miniature suit of armor Professor Purgatory designed for him. The armor allows him to fly short-distances and provides him with a modicum of protection. It is also outfitted with retractable barbs that allow him to better grasp an opponent. These barbs inject a toxin that weakens mental resistance (i.e., drains a target's Will Save), increasing the Cretin's chances of possessing a foe. This toxin deadens nerve sensations, so a target often does not even realize he or she is under attack until too late (the drain has the Subtle extra). The Cretin retains enough sense of tactics to go after obvious bricks and powerhouses, as he knows they tend to have less resistance to his possession power.

The Cretin also dresses his regular host body in a superhero costume when fighting alongside his allies. This consists of a black hood to hide his face, a tight-fitting black body stocking that showcases all his quivering bulk, a broad white belt, baggy gold shorts, and white gloves and boots. Sister Splendor designed the outfit herself to make the ex-Vitruvian man's body look completely ridiculous; it pleases her no end that she was responsible for turning the

wonderfully handsome villain into an awkward, ungainly, flabby shell. She is petty enough to hold a grudge even against someone who is to all intents and purposes deceased. She always laughs a spiteful, silent chuckle whenever she watches the Cretin wobble into action in his full-sized form. This further demonstrates that she may well be the most hateful member of the team.

The former Meta-Maestro still has a few "do-gooder" impulses left in him. He occasionally dons his action-costume and "patrols" his neighborhood, looking for crimes to stop and people to help. To his credit, he has prevented a couple of muggings, stopped a drunk driver from running over a little boy, and rescued a cat from a tree (though he then fell on top of the cat's owner, sending the sixty-year old woman to the hospital). But he mostly bumbles around, offering to carry groceries for people, open doors, and the like. The less kindly residents poke fun at his porky physique and silly long johns. The Cretin is hurt by the mockery others direct at him but too polite to say anything in return.

Unknown to anyone else, the Cretin's possession of the Vitruvian Man's body is having an odd side-effect—it is slowly repairing/re-growing the neural tissue of Charlie Morrison's brain. Whether this means Charlie's mind may someday reemerge remains to be seen. If it does, the sad-sack ex-super criminal would do anything to escape the clutches of Purgatory and Sister Splendor. As much as Charlie would fear being punished by the Professor if caught, he would be even more terrified of remaining anywhere near Sister Splendor.

Adventures With The Cretin

I Want a New Action Figure

Captain Valiant, one of Earth's mightiest heroes, walks into a bank and demands an ice cream cone. He is holding an unconscious fat fan in his arms. Banks don't have ice cream, and when he is told this, the Captain begins to sob and scream. He stalks out, leaving a big hole in the wall. Ten minutes later he appears at a fast food restaurant and makes the same demand. They give him an ice cream cone, which he

eats, giggling and dribbling ice cream down the front of his costume. He still has the unconscious fat man draped over one arm.

Over the next hour he has done the same thing at a drugstore (they offered him an ice cream sandwich, which he didn't want, so he smashed the place up on his way out), a realtor (they gave him a lollypop, which he liked), a bookstore (where everyone ran away before he had a chance to demand any ice cream) and at last, an Ice Cream shop (alas, he was already tired of ice cream and demanded French fries instead, and when they couldn't give him any, he threw a tantrum and smashed the place flat).

Word reaches the Player characters of this weird crime wave while it's still in progress. It's all very perplexing. Captain Valiant is one of the most revered superheroes in America and easily one of the most powerful. He's been keeping the Free World safe since the end of the Nixon administration. What could have happened to him? As an added complication, at least one of the PCs should be aware that the Captain is not only one of America's mightiest heroes, but a mean, narcissistic jerk.

It's going to be tough to stop him. Captain Valiant won't listen to any pleas to desist, he can't be reasoned with, he just wants more junk food. Or some shiny talisman that one of the PCs derives their powers from (if any of them have powers that come from a shiny talisman). Capturing him without hurting the fat man he is carrying on one arm will be even more difficult.

As you have no doubt guessed, the Cretin has gotten hold of Captain Valiant's body. The fat guy he's lugging around is of course the comatose shell that was once the Vitruvian Man. If his Vitruvian Man body gets hurt, the Cretin will get very upset and as you can see from the stats below, that would be a bad thing.

If the PCs do manage to rescue Captain Valiant from the clutches of the Cretin, they may have two problems on their hands. First, if they have captured the tiny terror himself, his big mean pals will come looking for him. Professor Purgatory is very

fond of the little guy and will go to unusual lengths to get him back.

Their second problem is Captain Valiant himself. He's an influential, well-respected public figure (although his popularity has been waning in recent years, due to his messy divorce and his unwavering support for the invasion of Iraq). He's also a vindictive, arrogant self-absorbed prima-donna and he will feel no gratitude toward the PCs who rescued him. In fact, he will bear them a lasting grudge for having made him look less powerful than they are and is suspicious that they set the whole thing up themselves. He would have.

He'll use his influence to make life difficult for them. Their government contacts (if any) become less willing to talk to them, the police become less cooperative with them, people who listen to Captain Valiant's talk radio program hassle them when they see them in costume. He won't send hired killers after them or try to ambush them himself—he's a jerk, not a criminal. But he will try to mess them up in any way he can. Then he'll get distracted and forget about them.

A note about Captain Valiant's stats. The PCs will have another chance to encounter the Captain later on in this book. There we list him as PL 13 and as having much lower Strength and much higher Attack and Defense scores. The reason the stats look different is that the Cretin is driving his body. Captain Valiant's powers depend to a great degree on his self-confidence, which has been waning in recent years. But the Cretin has boundless self-confidence, especially while riding around in this swell new body. He does not, however, have Captain Valiant's skill or years of combat experience.

Captain Valiant

PL: 19

Str: 18/48(+4/19) **Dex:** 8 (-1)
Con: 20 (+5) **Int:** 6 (-2) **Wis:** 8 (-1)
Cha: 8 (-1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack:** 8 **Defense:** 8
Damage: 19 **Toughness Save:** 5/19
Fortitude Save: 19 **Reflexes Save:** -1
Willpower Save: -1

Feats: Diehard, Endurance 1, Power Attack.

Powers: Enhanced Strength 20, Flight 6 (500 mph), Immunity (cold, disease, heat, pressure, poison, vacuum), Protection 14 (10 Impervious), Super-Senses 10 (Extended Hearing and Sight x100, Ultra-Hearing, Ultra-Vision, X-Ray Vision), Super-Strength 12 (Max Load: 100 Kilotons; PF: Super-Breath, PF: Thunderclap).

Your New Best Friend

A fat, mentally-challenged man in a home-made cape and hood walks up to the PCs in public and tells them that he saw them on the television and that he wants to help them rid the world of crime. Can he be their new best friend? He is, he pauses for dramatic emphasis, the Cretin! Righter of wrongs, doer of... um... stuff... good stuff, usually (but sometimes he has bad thoughts)...

If the PCs gently try to tell him that he can't join their team, he laughs and says that he doesn't want to—he's already a member of a totally awesome superhero team and he's inviting *them* to join *him*.

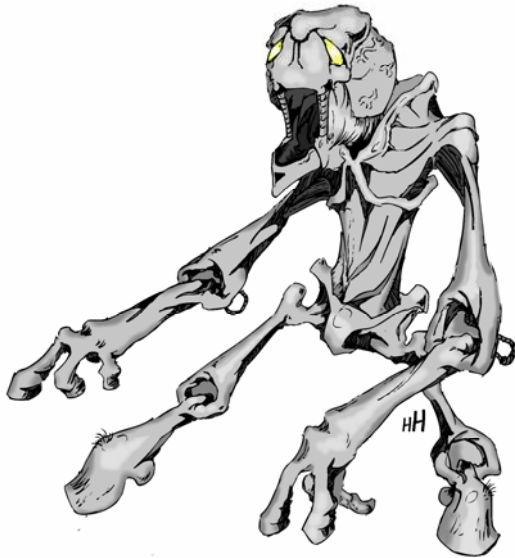
Whatever they reply, he isn't dissuaded, and he will turn up at the scene of their next few public battles, getting in the way and putting himself in danger. If the PCs treat him harshly, he starts to cry, tells them that they're bad and that his super friends will punish them. Then he runs away. If they save him, he is blubberingly grateful.

If the PCs were mean to him, the Ordo Ultima will shortly get in touch. The Professor is very fond of the Cretin and doesn't like to see his feelings hurt.

If on the other hand they have saved him from danger, the Professor contacts them in person, accompanied by a couple of other heavies like Sister Splendor and/or the Penitent. He invites them to join

his team! The Cretin stands beaming happily nearby. Now they can be best friends forever! Do the PCs take this opportunity to infiltrate one of the world's most dangerous supervillain teams?

THE OUT-WARDER



Quote: *"I can stretch the fabric of your reality-space as easily as one of your offspring stretches the confection you call taffy."*

PL: 9

Real Identity: Unknown (may not even have an "identity" as such)

Dual Identity: Secret. Neither any of its teammates nor anyone else in our reality knows its real name.

Group Affiliation: The Ordo Ultima (for the moment)

Nationality: As an extradimensional non-human, the Out-Warder has no citizenship and its ambiguous legal status is sure to cause complications if it is ever arrested.

Height: Varies (see "Powers")

Weight: Varies (see "Powers")

Hair Color: Varies (see "Powers")

Eye Color: Varies (see "Powers")

Age: Unknown, and probably unknowable. The Out-Warder comes from a dimension where time doesn't work the same way.

Str: 8 (-1) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 9 (-1)
Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 20 (+5) **Cha:** 6 (-2)

Initiative: 8 **Attack Bonus:** 9
Defense: 11 **Toughness Save:** 7
Fortitude Save: 7 **Reflexes Save:** 12
Willpower Save: 9

Skills: Computers 6 (+9), Disable Device 8 (+11), Disguise 5 (+3), Languages (English, German, Chinese, Latin, Russian) Notice 5 (+10), Stealth 11 (+14).

Feats: Evasion, Improved Defense 2, Improved Initiative 1, Move-By Action, Track

Powers: Additional Limb 1 (prehensile tongue), Blast 9 (Extra: Area Effect-Explosion; Flaw: Touch; Power Feats: Indirect 3, Triggered 2; Deflection 9; All ranged attacks; Extra: , Ranged; Paralyze 9; Extras: Alternate Save [Reflex], Area Effect-Shapeable; Flaw: Slow; PF: Triggered 2), Elongation 3, Immunity 1 (terrestrial diseases), Mind Shield 5, Morph 6 (Any form of same mass; Flaw: Partially Limited-last three ranks cannot be used unless Out-Warder has sampled genetic material of subject), Spatial Control 9 (AP: Dimension Pocket 9; AP: Teleport 3; Extra: Portal), Strike 3 (barbed tongue), Super-Movement 2 (Trackless, Wall-Crawling), Super-Senses 5 (Danger Sense, Darkvision, Direction Sense, Distance Sense)

Complications: No real understanding of human social behavior, always acts furtive and shifty, even when in human form.

Drawback: Weakness (Major; Must rest within pocket dimension minimum one hour per day or suffer cumulative -1 on all ability scores each 5 hours beyond the initial 24 that he goes without such rest); Total Drawback points: -2

Background and History

A few years ago, before ever encountering Professor Purgatory, X'Hort led a Borderer raiding party out into the vastness of the planes, in search of plunder. More daring than most of his race, X'Hort led his band to the outskirts of the Radiant Corridor, a far-distant continuum ruled by the dreaded Over-Masters. The Borderers knew little of the Over-Masters, save that even their long extinct creators has spoken of them with fear and respect. Staying to the edges of the Radiant Corridor universe, the raiding party watched in awe as several absolutely awe-inspiring vessels passed before them, a

fleet of gargantuan living ships bioengineered from proto-matter that responded to the thoughts of those within. Cautious and wary, X'Hort and his crew finally found what they hope for—a small craft that lagged far behind the others. Sensing treasure to be had, they descended upon it *en masse*, and fought their way inside, battling past the huge, rending mouths, death-ray casting giant eyes, and flailing tentacles the ship had sprouted as they approached. When they entered the interior of the little ship, they faced a real challenge: a huge, multi-limbed creature covered in boney chitin. X'Hort lost a third of his crew to the thing before eventually bringing it down.

Most of the bio-tech that lined the ship was useless to the Borderers, but they did find several nodes of macro-nutritive fluid, enough to feed their warren for weeks. The creature they fought was butchered, as they took its exoskeleton to use as armor plates and its preternaturally sharp claws to forge into bladed weapons. X'Hort—always the most curious of his kind—always took two additional trophies back to their ship: an oblong, brightly colored egg the size of his fist and a weird contraption the like of which he had never seen—but which he was sure was important. When they returned to the Borderers' world-ship, X'Hort tried to break upon the egg, to no avail. It resisted all attempts to crack its shell. The device he brought back was completely inexplicable to him, but he liked to sit and stare at it from time to time. Eventually he tired of puzzling over the items, and stored them away in one of the cargo bays the Borderers used to stash booty they had no immediate use for.

The egg remained intact and inert until Professor Purgatory's arrival upon the Borderer ship. When he entered the cargo bay when the egg was kept, an odd humming began to emanate from inside; intrigued, the Professor questioned the Borderers about its origins. When he learned it came from a far-distant continuum, he took it to his lab for study. The egg hatched shortly after he began probing it, discharging a mucous-coated, yellow-white humanoid, evidently a male of its species, judging by its composition of

organs. The Professor quarantined the thing, putting it under heavy guard until he could ascertain what threat it posed, if any. He supplied it with a variety of foodstuffs, and varied the environmental conditions it was kept in until the creature seemed comfortable.

The alien matured quickly, growing to near human size in a matter of weeks. It showed intense curiosity about its environment, a clear sign of intelligence. The Prof. began attempts at communication, and supplied the creature with textbooks in various languages, educational toys, and other learning materials. Within days of reaching its final growth, the creature began to display a grasp of language and mathematics. Soon it could converse in English, German, Latin, and the Borderer tongue (and sometimes broke into an indecipherable cant that defied the Prof's analysis).

It (or "he", at the thing used masculine pronouns when referring to itself) identified itself as an Out-Warder (best translation possible). He stated he lived to serve the Over-Master that had designed his crypto-gene patterns. If this Over-Master was dead, he would then serve the Over-Master who had claimed his egg. The one called Professor Purgatory was obviously an Over-Master—did he not command absolute power over all others? Was he not responsible for the maturation of his Out-Warder's bio-sac? Professor Purgatory tried to argue that he was no "Over-Master"—he was an incarnate angel of the One True God. This only confused the Out-Warder, who was unable to comprehend the Professor's words and insisted on the rightness of its own arguments. Finally the Professor decided that if goodly providence had made him the creature's master, who was he to argue? He then set about questioning the extra-dimensional as to its capabilities, and putting the creature's answers to the test.

Whatever its true origins or intended purpose, the creature showed a truly amazing ability to twist the fabric of space in its immediate vicinity. The Out-Warder could teleport short distances, elongate his limbs, and deflect ranged attacks by stretching or contracting space

itself. He could cause small-scale shockwaves by violently “rippling” space or slow those who approached too near him down to a crawl by “thickening” the stuff of reality. His control was such that he could generate these spatial irregularities and then delay their effects, setting them to go off when certain conditions were met (the Triggered power feat applies). The creature was quite inventive in the use of these powers. He was even able to mold a small “pocket space” that he could use to store objects.

The Out-Warder was not terribly useful as a soldier—the creature was quick but his spindly build made him a bit weaker and less hardy than even most average humans. He had little in the way of hand-to-hand offense or defense. Even the magnitude of his attack powers was less than that of most earthly super-beings with similar talents. But the other traits he exhibited compensated. In addition to his space-warping capabilities, the Out-Warder could “see” living things even in complete darkness via some unknown sense, unerringly track others by their distinctive Kirlian auras, and cling to even the slickest surfaces. Most useful of all, the alien could morph into the forms of other humanoids of roughly equal size, so long as he ingested a bit of their tissue. He would make an excellent assassin and spy for the Professor to use against sinners and transgressors. This fit the Out-Warder’s nature, as he proved averse to face-to-face confrontation, preferring less direct tactics to defeat foes.

Professor Purgatory tried his usual brand of theological indoctrination on the Out-Warder, but it was lost on the other-planar being. Brain scans showed the creature’s weird cerebral structures made it highly resistant to any mind-influencing effects. Still, the Out-Warder seemed only to happy to obey the Prof’s orders, and mystic divinations showed no demonic or diabolic taint, so the Prof reluctantly accepted the Out-Warder as part of his retinue. He still keeps an eye on the strange visitor for signs of aberrant behavior.

The other artifact retrieved from the Radiant Corridor was truly weird in design: a black, diamond-shaped chunk of bio-matter

(warm to the touch) the size of a human heart, suspended inside a crystal lattice by four sinewy pseudopods that grow from the center of the thing. Its purpose has remained incomprehensible even to Professor Purgatory. He has not yet been able to determine if it alive, some sort of mechanism, or a combination of both. He continues to study the object from time to time. The Professor has questioned the Out-Warder about the object, but the Out-Warder claims to have no knowledge of its structure or function. Whether this is the truth or not remains to be seen.

Appearance and Demeanor

This sly and sinister creature is very intelligent, observant, quiet, and unemotional. The Out-Warder goes about his assignments with quiet, ruthless efficiency. He follows Professor Purgatory’s orders to the letter (not necessarily the spirit), genetically recognizing the Prof. as his master, by virtue of the Prof.’s intellect and power, not because of any belief in Purgatory’s twisted religious doctrine. The Professor is the closest thing to an Over-Master the Out-Warder has encountered since arriving in the universe humans inhabit. The Out-Warder accepts the Prof.’s other followers as fellow servitors, seeing their value in that each play an important role in serving his master. The Out-Warder shows almost no sign of emotions, at least not as humans understand them. He is cold and calculating in his actions, and though he is not bloodthirsty or cruel, extinguishing a human life means no more to him than erasing chalk lines from a blackboard. It is unlikely he even views humans or other terrestrial organisms as being “alive” as he understands life; almost none even come close to having the right “aura”—only the Professor comes close of all those in this dimension.

Out-Warder has a set of inhuman drives and impulses that compel him to behavior totally unrelated to his servitude. The Out-Warder has begun secretly assembling a “nest” composed of a bizarre collection of materials he has scavenged from both the Professor’s lair and the outside world. Some of the components of

the nest are mineral, some mechanical, and a few are organic—preserved organs taken from various life forms. He is putting together this nest in an invisible pocket dimension, which has allowed him to escape detection so far. The Out-Warder is building this out of instinct, without conscious knowledge of what the nest is for; perhaps he is preparing for some sort of metamorphosis into another stage of life, maybe it is a futile gesture to attract a mate (none of his kind exist within dozens of planes), or perhaps there is a more malevolent purpose behind it all.

The Out-Warder's natural form is that of a semi-humanoid creature with pale gray skin, an over-sized cranium, large pupil-less eyes, and a toothless mouth. Fleshy, Velcro-like pads cover the tips of the Out-Warder's fingers and toes, allowing him to scale most surfaces and even cling to ceilings. A semi-prehensile tongue can extend several inches from his mouth, and it is tipped with a feeding organ similar to the beak of a squid. The Out-Warder normally wears a simple grey jumpsuit/body stocking—he has little use for clothing, but Professor Purgatory insisted he not go unclothed. The Out-Warder prefers teleporting, but his movements in three dimensions are furtive and unnatural-looking, something between a crouching hop and a slither. He is surprisingly fast and agile.

As noted, the Out-Warder is capable of duplicating the appearance of anything whose genetic material he has sampled. He cannot increase or decrease his mass, duplicate the powers of the individuals he mimics, or replicate clothing. His changes are cosmetic only. To compensate for his inability to duplicate clothing, he stores several appropriate outfits in his pocket dimensional storage space. Though the Out-Warder self-identifies as a male, he has no compunction about assuming female guises. He has tasted the DNA of the Cretin's host body (that of the Vitruvian Man, before Sister Splendor downgraded his appearance) and the Rage Angels (while in their human forms), giving him an assortment of highly attractive bodies of varying ages and sexes to choose from. He doesn't have to consume flesh from

someone to get their genetic code; a strand of hair or a fingernail clipping will do.

Despite his ability to assume handsome/beautiful human forms, the Out-Warder is poor at any sort of prolonged social interaction. It isn't so much what he does or says—it's just that human beings sense there is just *something wrong* about him; he doesn't even belong in this cluster of universes, let alone on Earth. As a result, he has developed a talent for being quiet and unobtrusive. He has no particular psi-power or super-ability that aids him in this—the Out-Warder has just become good at being sneaky. He does well when paired with Sister Tranquility on missions where stealth is a must.

The Out-Warder as yet cannot transverse dimensions or timelines, only distances. He cannot spend too much time in the Earth's dimension before he begins suffering adverse side effects; when asked why this is, he has explained that “space is too heavy here, and there is not enough bright flow”—whatever that means. He has to frequently rest inside his pocket dimension or his health begins to decline.

Adventures With the Out-Warder:

1) The Riddle of the Thirteen Chairs

Eleanor Haverford, one of the city's richest philanthropists, gets in touch with a PC who has a reputation as an occult investigator. She has a very upsetting matter to discuss and she will only agree to see the Player Character at her private museum.

The Haverford Museum is located in a tasteful brownstone in one of the city's oldest neighborhoods. It isn't yet open to the public. Mrs. Haverford is still getting it ready (and has been for years—she's a bit of a perfectionist).

When the PC arrives at the museum, Mrs. Haverford greets them politely, but she looks terribly agitated under her old-money charm. She will show them a locked room where a collection of Louis XV chairs are on display. There are twelve chairs in the collection, which came from her family's own private hoard. She knows the history of the set (made for the Duc D'Avoyard in the 18th Century) and she

knows that there are indisputably twelve chairs. But when she counted them two days ago, there were thirteen. It's inexplicable, impossible. She counted and counted them. There were thirteen chairs. Is she going crazy?

She locked the room, no one has gone in or out until the PC arrived. Can they solve the riddle of the thirteen chairs?

When she opens the door and ushers the investigators inside, a shocking sight greets them. There are only twelve chairs, but a naked man is lying unconscious on the floor. It's the King of Belgium. Not the current King, but one from the earliest years of the 20th Century. It's easy to tell who he is, his portrait is hanging on the wall. If for some reason the PCs don't notice this, Mrs. Haverford immediately points it out. Then she gives them a disapproving look—they're supposed to be the detectives here, after all. The King has no navel. As the PCs examine him, His Majestic and Royal Highness groans and stirs back into semi-consciousness. He remembers nothing but the fact that he is the King of Belgium, not even his name. (which should in fact be Albert).

If the PCs question the King, he won't know how to answer them and will grow more upset the more questions they ask. If he gets asked more than five questions, or if a PC mentions anything about his missing navel, the King suddenly attacks them and then tries to run away.

If the PCs don't provoke him to attack, Mrs. Haverford will ask the King a brief question in French and then will ask him in English "If you really are King Albert the First of Belgium, then why don't you speak French?"

This has the same effect—he will assault the nearest PC and then flee. If he isn't stopped, the monarch will run out of the room, down a hallway and attempt to snatch a small marble statuette of Saint Bernadette (made in the Italian Renaissance by an unknown sculptor) and then run out the front door with it. If the PC ever loses sight of him during the chase, the King will attempt to hide by turning back into a Louis XV chair.

Here's what's really going on.

Professor Purgatory covets that statue. It isn't magical—he just likes the look of agony and dread on the little saint's features. He set the Out-Warder to fetch it for him, saying as he did so that the creature's shapeshifting abilities and stealthy nature would make it an ideal burglar. The Out-Warder misunderstood him and thought that this meant it wasn't allowed to use its space-bending abilities on this mission, and would have to rely on its stealth and its ability to assume other forms.

The Out-Warder made its way through the museum's halls and galleries, only to be interrupted in its search by Mrs. Haverford. It quickly disguised itself as a chair, but Mrs. Haverford locked it in the room and went to find help. Sensing that this disguise wasn't helpful, the Out-Warder instead took the form of one of the human beings portrayed on the wall. When it saw that it had been found out, it decided to throw stealth to the wind and just take the statue by force.

If the PC manages to subdue the Out-Warder, it will adopt various forms in an inept attempt to trick them into letting it go (Jesus, a museum guard, Mrs. Haverford, a Dadaist statue by Marcel DuChamp).

Professor Purgatory will want to rescue the Out-Warder before it can give up any of his secrets (although in fact he doesn't need to worry—it won't occur to the creature to try to bargain for its freedom) and he will send Cryptic Star to bring him back. If this fails, he'll send Regiment, and if that fails, he'll send Sister Splendor.

"Eighth Floor: Infinity, Ninth Floor: Lingerie"

A man falls out a window and lands at the PCs' feet. Scrawny, undernourished, crazed and desperate looking, he laughs and laughs. "It was the window!" He cackles, and lapses into unconsciousness.

The building that he has fallen out of is a department store—one that's going out of business and has only a few days left before it closes its doors for good. If the PCs go inside, they find the shelves largely empty, the staff listless and unhelpful,

waiting out their last few weary hours on the job.

The unconscious man worked here himself—he's an overage stock-boy named Casper Houseman who no one has seen in a week. If the PCs have some way of reading his unconscious mind or waking him up, they can learn his unhappy story immediately. If not, it will have to wait until the end of the adventure.

The stock room that Casper threw himself out of is near the top of the building. As the PCs ride the escalator up to the right floor, they may notice that it's taking kind of a long time. The "up" escalator is enclosed in a staircase, with a landing at the top where you turn around and go up the next flight. But they've gone up at least three flights of escalators by now. They can't see further up or down than the next landing, so there's no way to be sure how many more flights there are (although X-Ray Vision or Clairvoyance will reveal something pretty disturbing—they can see themselves on the escalators above and below them).

The next floor can't be more than twenty feet above them. How can there be more than three flights of escalators? There are more. Endlessly more. The escalators and landings just go on and on.

If the PCs fight their way back down the moving stairs, they find that the escalators and landings seem to go on forever in this direction, too. For characters who need food and water to survive, this is a serious situation. They might be able to survive a month in here without food (although that's sure to be pretty unpleasant) but they'll die in a week without water.

As they traverse the endless line of escalators, the PCs can still hear the music and occasional announcements over the store's PA. When closing time comes, the escalators stop moving and the lights go out. Next morning they start up again when the store opens. There are regular announcements about the store's final closing, which will happen in two days from when the PCs first set foot on the escalator. This may sound ominous to the PCs, but in fact nothing drastic happens when the store closes forever. The lights just go out and

the escalators grind to a halt for good. Most Player Characters will have started blasting or bashing away at the walls long before then.

It's easy to get out of the trap by breaking through the wall, which is only Toughness 6. PCs who do this find themselves about halfway up to the second floor. The Out-Warder is standing at the base of the escalators, disguised once more as the King of Belgium.

Characters with Teleportation or some other, related means of transporting things (Super-Movement: Dimensional, for example) will have to overcome the Out-Warder's power (DC 15) to leave the space-warp he has generated. For there are really only two escalators and there is really just one landing. The Out-Warder has bent space around so that the top of the top escalator feeds into the bottom of the bottom escalator.

Earlier he trapped poor Casper Houseman in the empty stock-rooms, where he had gone to smoke a joint. Every time he opened the door to leave the small group of rooms where he was imprisoned, the door led back into another one of the rooms. It's a lucky thing there was a drinking fountain in there or he surely would have died of thirst. In the end, he jumped out the only window and landed at the feet of the PCs—an unfortunate coincidence for the Out-Warder.

Once he is confronted by the angry PCs, the ersatz King of Belgium will flee through the half-empty store. If they manage to seize him, he will suddenly recover his wits enough to remember that he can teleport and will try to use that power to escape.

Casper found a ballpoint pen on his second day of captivity and he left a kind of diary written on the walls upstairs. If the PCs go up there, then they can easily find out what happened to him without having to wait for him to recover consciousness.

THE RAGE ANGELS



Quotes: <Taylor, in human guise> "Come on Sweet Thing...whatever you want we'll be happy to give it to you"
 <Megan, as a Rage Angel> "Hrrrrmmm...lick up your blood...rip you and taste you...rargh..."

Rage Angel Megan

PL: 9

Real Identity: Mary Alice Amaretto

Dual Identity: Not known to the general public.

Group Affiliation: The Ordo Ultima

Nationality: American

Height: 5'8"

Weight: 120 pounds

Hair Color: Blonde (with brown roots)

Eye Color: Green

Age: 64

Str: 20 (+5) **Dex:** 20 (+5)

Con: 18/24 (+4/+7) **Int:** 6 (-2) **Wis:** 18

(+4) **Cha:** 16 (+3) **Initiative:** 9

Attack Bonus: 9 **Defense:** 9 **Toughness**

Save: 10 (7 if she is caught flatfooted)

Fortitude Save: 7 **Reflexes Save:** 9

Willpower Save: 4

Skills: Acrobatics +10 (+15), Escape Artist 5 (+10), Intimidate 5 (+8), Notice 9 (+13), Performance 1 (+4), Survival 10 (+13)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Evasion +2, Defensive Roll +3, Distract (Works with the skill Intimidate), Fast Overrun, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Overrun, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Rage, Sneak Attack, Tracking

Powers: Drain (Constitution) 9, Emotion Control 11 (Love/Lust; Flaw: Limited-one emotion; Alternate Save-Fortitude [based on pheromones]), Enhanced Constitution 6, Flight 5 (Maximum Speed 250 MPH), Immunity 3 (Aging, Disease, Poison), Morph 1 (between her human and monstrous forms), Regeneration 12 (+9 to Constitution Checks to recover from damage, takes only one minute to recover from being Injured), Strike 5 (Claws; Power Feat: Mighty), Strike 9 (Blazing Magical Aura; Extra: Aura), Super-Senses 1 (Low-Light Vision), Super-Strength 4 (Maximum Lift: 6 tons)

Complications: Incapable of complex thought, can't resist impulses, can't surrender or negotiate.

Drawbacks: Power Loss (Cannot use Claws [Strike 5], Flight, or Super-Strength in human form), and Power Loss (Cannot use Drain or Emotion Control in monstrous form).

Rage Angel Taylor



PL: 11

Real Identity: Tracy Dickinson

Dual Identity: Not known to the general public.

Group Affiliation: The Ordo Ultima

Nationality: American

Height: 5'4"

Weight: 140 pounds

Hair Color: Black

Eye Color: Green

Age: 74

Str: 20 (+5) **Dex:** 20 (+5)

Con: 18/24 (+4/+7) **Int:** 8 (-1) **Wis:** 18

(+4) **Cha:** 16 (+3) **Initiative:** 9

Attack Bonus: 12 **Defense:** 10

Toughness Save: 11 (7 if she is caught flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** 7 **Reflexes**

Save: 9 **Willpower Save:** 4

Skills: Acrobatics +10 (+15), Escape Artist 5 (+10), Intimidate 5 (+8), Notice 9 (+13), Performance 1 (+4), Survival 10 (+13)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Evasion +2, Defensive Roll +4, Distract (Works with the skill Intimidate), Fast Overrun, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Overrun, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Rage, Sneak Attack, Tracking

Powers: Drain (Intelligence) 11, Emotion Control 9 (Love/Lust; Flaw: Limited-one emotion; Alternate Save-Fortitude [based on pheromones]), Enhanced Constitution 6, Flight 5 (Maximum Speed 250 MPH), Immunity 3 (Aging, Disease, Poison), Morph 1 (between her human and monstrous forms), Regeneration 12 (+9 to Constitution Checks to recover from damage, takes only one minute to recover from being Injured),

Strike 6 (Claws; Power Feat: Mighty), Strike 10 (Blazing Magical Aura; Extra: Aura), Super-Senses 1 (Low-Light Vision), Super-Strength 4 (Maximum Lift: 6 tons)

Complications: Incapable of complex thought, can't resist impulses, can't surrender or negotiate.

Drawbacks: Power Loss (Cannot use Claws [Strike 5], Flight, or Super-Strength in human form), and Power Loss (Cannot use Drain or Emotion Control in monstrous form).

Background and History

These two filthy, feral winged creatures were once Megan and Taylor, slightly past-their-prime adult film actresses who worked together in a mid-level strip club known as Good Vibrations, in Los Angeles in 1978.

Taylor (real name: Tracy Dickinson) was the older of the two, in her early forties and blowsy from too many gin-and-tonics and late night parties; she was still a comely woman, but she was showing her age and getting a little heavy. This had relegated her to bit parts and comedy relief in the porn industry.

Megan (real name: Mary Alice Amaretto) was over a decade younger, with the rail thin body and diamond-sharp cheekbones of a model, but unfortunately she had developed a raging appetite for cocaine and amphetamines. After a lot of early success, she'd poisoned her reputation with adult film directors and other porn actors, and as she moved into her thirties she was considered washed-up.

Both of the ladies were going down the rungs of the sex industry by the time they hit Good Vibrations as dancers, though at least they were both sober by then. Taylor had "found God", quit drinking, and was struggling to live as a "good Christian"; she continued to work as a stripper only because she had few other marketable skills. She had begun serving as a mentor for Megan, and had gotten her friend through rehab and off drugs, though Megan still drank and chain-smoked cigarettes. The two supported and protected each other like sisters. Taylor and Megan did their best to save and pool their money, planning to buy some rental properties and maybe go back to school together. Taylor had wanted to

get out of the adult film world even before her looks started to go—the industry had gotten a lot meaner since she got in as a teenager years before. Part of Megan still liked the attention; she had wanted to be an actress and she knew showing off her body was as close as she would ever get. They even talked about getting back in touch with their families. Taylor really had no one—she had run away from a trailer park existence when she was fifteen, but Megan had come from a middle class background, her father an insurance salesman and her mother a secretary.

What the future might have held for the pair will never be known. The two young women were unlucky enough to be on stage the night when Professor Purgatory paid a visit to the club, slaughtering the patrons and razing the establishment to the ground. Megan and Taylor were among the few survivors, and unfortunately their unconscious bodies were lying right in the Professor's exit path out of the remains of the establishment. He decided he would make it his mission to "rehabilitate" the women, and took them back to his headquarters (at that time located in a remote Mexican valley). He hoped to turn the two sinful specimens into near-angelic beings, fit companions and servants for a divine agent such as himself. Over the next five years Megan and Taylor were subjected to an array of mind-bending drugs, painful occult operations, and terrible incantations designed to smash their bodies and personalities and then rebuild them from the ground up.

The sad result was the Rage Angels, monsters that were absolutely beautiful in body but utterly cruel and vicious in mind and spirit. Their intellects devolved to the point where they were barely capable of speech, and were concerned only with fulfilling their basest desires. They constantly thrashed against their bonds and scrabbled at the air with their claws. The Professor found these results quite disappointing but believed the pair was still a work in progress. He penned them up and has studied their cases off and on in the years since. He moved them to his extra-dimensional HQ *Paradise Delayed* with his

other "belongings", but at one point ago one of the Borderer matrons assigned to their care became careless—Megan and Taylor escaped their cage, slew their handler, and fled to the bowels of the ship, scavenging for food in the cargo bays and feasting on the occasional Borderer or Vore-Dog.

Eventually the Prof. got around to rounding them up and getting them back into the lab. Trying a new approach, he devised a serum that allowed them to revert to their human identities, though there were still some minor...problems. Neither quite regained their former intellectual capacity, and both seemed obsessed with pleasure—craving food, sex, and violence. Taylor's human body showed signs of premature aging. The serum had to be re-administered daily to prevent them reverting to the Rage Angels. Still, the Prof considered this progress.

He became intrigued when tests showed that as humans they showed signs of psychic ability. It turned out that the serum gave them the power of psi-vampirism. Taylor could drain away the youth of others, while Megan could reduce the intelligence and maturity of those in her clutches. These effects weren't permanent, but of course the pair was unlikely to allow anyone whom they rendered helpless to survive and recover.

He also conditioned them to respond to simple voice commands in their "angelic" forms, making them more of an asset, though either he or Sister Splendor had to be present for their compliance. They tended to attack or try to eat anyone else who gave them orders (Cryptic Star ended up with twenty-four stitches in his arm when he tried to get them to fetch his coffee). The Professor pondered as to how best use their new capabilities.

Finally he hit on a solution. He would re-introduce the women to their old world, having them work as exotic dancers, bar maids, and prostitutes around the world. But the men (or women) that went home with them would find more than bargained for in their embrace. These reprobates would be maimed or killed for their indiscretions. The Prof. implanted communication/tracking devices in the base

of their necks, told them of their new roles, and set them out into the world. He provided them with enough funds and serum to get them through a month at a time, promising to check back in on them frequently. The cyber-implants allow him to find and speak to them anywhere, and to force their change into the Rage Angels whenever he wants to.

Coincidentally, both Rage Angels have relatives that have crossed Professor Purgatory's path, if only tangentially. Taylor's niece became a monster-hunting vigilante after her rural Louisiana family was slaughtered by a demon. A hater of all things supernatural, she crossed paths with Sister Splendor a few years ago, barely escaping with her life (her niece has no super-powers). Megan's cousin Carla is the former girlfriend (and one true love) of the cyborg villain Deathwatch. Both were caught up in the Professor's last scheme, and Deathwatch was one of the casualties of the Motley Crew. (Again, refer to *Promise of Purgatory*).

Appearance and Demeanor

When not being commanded by Professor Purgatory or Sister Splendor the Rage Angels will actively hunt down and attack anything they perceive as prey (nearly anything that they believe they could eat); they will fly at top speed at their targets and slash away with their wicked talons until whatever it is they are attacking stops moving. Against especially tough opponents they will attempt to grapple their prey and if successful will then activate their mystic auras, burning their foes with arcane energies. They still understand English (and the Borderer language for that matter) and can grunt a few words, just enough to hurl epithets and insults, but they are basically savages, and will not negotiate or parlay under any circumstances. If captured or held at bay, they will adopt grotesque postures, mockeries of their former sexy movements.

When their efforts in combat are being directed, they will double-team a selected target, alternating between move-by attacks with their talons and grappling with the opponent. If Purgatory is present,

their fear of him overwhelms their sense of self-preservation and they will fight even unto destruction unless given the order to retreat.

Both Rage Angels are undeniably lovely of face and form, with glistening golden skin and magnificent white wings, but they are usually smeared with dirt, blood and filth. They prefer to parade about near-naked, wearing only the tattered remnants of their white robes.

As humans, their intellectual and language skills improve considerably, though neither could be classified as bright or well-spoken. Taylor is now unquestionably the smarter of the two, with Megan now borderline mentally challenged and semi-literate at best. Taylor uses her superior intelligence and slightly greater size to bully the woman she used to look as a little sister.

When in their human forms, they look similar to the way they did before they were experimented on by the Professor, but for some reason Taylor appears about a decade older than she was (early 50s) and Megan ten years younger (mid-20s). As a consequence, Taylor is once again relegated to a secondary role in their "seduce and destroy" missions, and she seethes with resentment over this. She often poses as Megan's mother or aunt, allowing Megan to take the initiative in approaching their sexual prey. But perhaps not surprisingly (given the circles they move in) many of their victims are the first to bring up the idea of Taylor joining their trysts, perhaps because she is still attractive or for the sheer "kink" value.

Even as human women they have a wild, feral glint in their eyes. While they appreciate the pleasure they get from their victims, they hold no emotional attachment to them. The men and women they get in their clutches are to be used and then fed upon (possibly literally). As humans they dress and act in a provocative, overtly sexual fashion. They come off as rather crude and foul-mouthed, but another aspect of their condition gives them heightened sex appeal, so their come-ons are still usually welcomed by the recipients. As seductresses they lure their victims to secluded spots, where they then drain them,

maim or kill them, then steal whatever they had on their persons. They can voluntarily change into the Rage Angels so long as they have had sexual intercourse within the last 24 hours, and will frequently do so to tear apart their conquests and feast on the remains.

Adventures With the Rage Angels:

1) Disco Bloodbath

Megan is on a mission for Professor Purgatory, when she happens to walk past a dance club that's playing old 1970s disco music. She is entranced—this is the music she used to party all night to. It's been forever since she's been to a disco. Unable to resist the impulse, she goes inside. Everything is all wrong—the decorations, the clothes, but the light show is just right and so is the music. She begins to dance and revel in the old familiar sounds and smells of a crowded dance floor under the mirrored ball. This is the only place where she was ever really happy. She only dimly remembered it, but now it's all coming back to her. Suddenly, for the first the first time in years, her nose starts hungering for cocaine.

She knows just where to go—the lady's washroom. But this isn't 1978. There is no pusher on duty at the restroom door and no coke for sale inside. Megan gets very angry and starts loudly demanding blow. When the bartender and then the bouncer try to calm her down, she goes berserk and starts butchering people right out on the dance floor. The air fills with screams as the music plays on and on.

At this moment Taylor arrives, puzzled as to what is taking Megan so long. She sees Megan chasing the patrons around and assumes that this must be the mission—she thought it was something else, but then again she gets confused sometimes. Taylor joins in the fun and the two of them block the club's exits. They are terrorizing people and herding them away from the doors when the police arrive and the whole thing turns into a hostage situation.

One of the patrons actually does have a coke stash in her purse and throws it to Megan, who delightedly tucks into it. She

demands that every one “disco the right way” and forces them to dance endlessly on the blood-slick floor while she sits at the bar, snurkling up lines of coke and laughing with glee as the crying, stumbling patrons try not to miss any steps. Every now and then she decides that one of them is dancing badly and kills them. Sometimes Taylor kills one for no reason at all.

The PCs can join the party at any point in these events. How the scenario unfolds depends on when they arrive.

Eventually Professor Purgatory will figure out what is going on and send the rest of the team to rescue his wayward angels. A stern talking-to awaits them when they get back home. From this point on, Professor Purgatory disapproves of disco music.

2) Dream-House Adventure Play-Set

Terror stalks suburbia! Something horrible has been attacking houses in a subdivision outside the Player Characters' home city. It tips over cars, rips its way into children's bedrooms through the wall and generally causes havoc. Witnesses have glimpsed its terrible winged shadow against the moon. Yet no one has been able to stop it, get a photo of it, or figure out where it goes during the day.

If the PCs study the pattern of these attacks, some curious things emerge. There have been between one and three attacks every night for a week. No one has been killed. Only property has been damaged. The creature clearly has claws and superhuman strength. Some of the attacks look almost random—cars picked and flung into swimming pools, dogs turned inside out, garden gnomes smashed for no reason. Yet every time a house is attacked, the creature always rips its way into the upper left corner on the second floor. It rummages around briefly, lets out a terrible, inhuman scream and leaves. Sometimes it attacks the next house in the row, some times it does not.

Here's what's really happening. Megan suddenly realized that she didn't know where she had left her Barbie doll. She looked around Professor Purgatory's lair for it, but it wasn't there. Then she remembered where she had left it—under

her bed in her old house, back when she was in sixth grade and starting to get more interested in boys than dolls. She decided to go get it.

The house where Megan grew up is in an older suburb, about an hour's drive outside the PCs' home city. Her parents are in their late eighties now and have long-since moved into a managed care facility in another state.

Megan found her house easily enough, but the door was locked and the key wasn't under the mat where it was supposed to be. Mom and Dad wouldn't open the door when she yelled (not surprising, since another family has lived here for years) and she got so upset that she ripped the door off its hinges.

Everything inside was wrong—nothing was the way she remembered. After rummaging around in her old room upstairs, Megan flew away feeling troubled and confused. All the houses look alike. She must have gone to the wrong one, she decided. So she ripped her way into another one. It wasn't right either. In despair, she went to the playground of her old elementary school and hid under the concrete turtle, just like she always used to when she was afraid (it's also where she first found out what makes boys and girls different). She's been sleeping there during the day, even though it's so much smaller than she remembered.

At night she tires to figure out where her house is and go get her Barbie. It usually too discouraging and upsetting for her to try more than one or two houses before she flies back, weeping and cursing, to her refuge under the turtle.

Meanwhile, Taylor has gone looking for her friend. She has no idea where Megan used to live, but she followed her at a distance and even though she lost sight of her near the end Taylor has arrived in the right neighborhood. She sees signs that Megan has been here—familiar claw marks and so forth. But she's been unable to locate her and she's getting really frustrated about it. Taylor has been taking her frustration out on inanimate objects and domestic pets, wrecking cars, demolishing lawn furniture and smashing garden gnomes.

In the daylight hours she hides in the nearby woods.

If this situation goes on much longer one or both of them may go on a bloody rampage, which will at least let Professor Purgatory know where they are so that he can come collect them. If a PC thinks to give Megan a Barbie doll, she is instantly pacified (she can't tell that it's not hers) and leaves of her own accord.

SISTER TRANQUILITY



Quote: *"I have to hit you until you fall down now. Afterward I get to work at the Seattle Star coffee shop and make lots of lattes—they're nice to me, and they let me have a free cappuccino brownie on my break."*

PL: 10

Real Identity: Maria Anita Gonzales

Dual Identity: Secret

Group Affiliation: The Ordo Ultima

Nationality: American

Height: 5'4"

Weight: 120 pounds

Hair Color: Brown

Eye Color: Brown

Age: 23

Str: 20 (+5) **Dex:** 24 (+7) **Con:** 18 (+4)

Int: 8 (-1) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 14 (+2)

Initiative: 11 **Attack Bonus:** 15

Defense: 13 (7 if she is unable to Dodge)

Toughness Save: 8 (4 if she is caught

Flatfooted) **Fortitude Save:** 8

Reflexes Save: 13 **Willpower Save:** 6

Skills: Acrobatics 12 (+19), Escape Artist 10 (+17), Notice 10 (+13), Profession (Waitress) 6 (+5), Search 8 (+11), Stealth 13 (+20)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Blind-Fight, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 4, Dodge Focus 6, Evasion, Fearless, Hide In Plain Sight, Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Throw, Improved Trip, Instant Up, Move-By Action, Power Attack, Prone Fighting, Stunning Attack, Takedown Attack, Weapon Bind

Powers: Immunity (to Emotion Control attacks), Super-Senses (Accurate Hearing, Acute Hearing, Blindsight, Radius Sense 5)

Complications: Naïve, suggestible, has little understanding of the way the world works. Utterly, totally serene no matter what is happening to her.

Background and History

Maria Anita Gonzales was born into an upper-middle class Cuban-American family in Washington, D.C., her father a lawyer-lobbyist and her mother a music teacher and sometime opera singer. The youngest of four children, Maria never seemed able to live up to the standards of her hard-charging professional parents or her over-achieving siblings. It wasn't that Maria was unintelligent or untalented—she simply didn't have the same serious nature as the rest of her family. She was more interested in exploring her various and passing interests than in wracking up awards and collecting trophies. As she grew older she was constantly berated and reprimanded for what her parents saw as her failures to live up to her potential—which only made her more determined than ever not to achieve, if only to demonstrate that her family couldn't force her to live up to their ideals. By the time she was 17 she was in a state of full-fledged teenage rebellion, fighting constantly with her parents and siblings.

After one particularly ugly argument, she decided to leave home and make her way to another city, leaving her unhappy home life behind.

After a four-day bus ride, Maria ended up in Los Angeles. Life on the streets proved a lot harder than Maria had expected, and in the weeks and months that followed Maria often found herself hungry, homeless, and scared. But she refused to call her family for help, turning instead to day-labor jobs, panhandling, and minor theft to survive. She slept in shelters and abandoned buildings. Eventually however, she got a steady job as a waitress in a trendy, college-student oriented eatery. Her outgoing personality and comely appearance made her a hit with many of the young men who stopped by, and Maria never lacked for boyfriends—or for cash, clothes, or rides in fancy cars.

By the time she was twenty, Maria had hooked up with a good-looking, smooth-talking young man named Alex, a hot-shot UCLA journalism student who organized rave parties to help pay his way through college. Alex also had other means of supplementing his income, namely dealing drugs—nothing too serious, just pot, ecstasy, amphetamines, and occasionally steroids (to his gym-rat friends). He was drawn to Maria's dark good looks and street-attitude—and figured she could help him reach a whole new audience for his parties. Maria knew that Alex had other girlfriends, mostly upscale young Anglo girls, but she didn't care. They always had a great time together and Alex paid her well for her help with the raves. She loved playing hostess at the parties, meeting all the hottest local musicians, making even more cash under the table by selling a little merchandise on her own. As Alex moved toward graduation, she took over more and more of his businesses, until she was basically running the show. Nearing twenty-two, Maria was almost ready to retire from the party life—she was smart enough to realize there was no real future in it, and she had long outgrown her need for to rebel against her parents. She figured on throwing on last big bash, enrolling in community college to get her GED, then applying to UCLA—probably to

major in public relations or marketing. She would never get the chance.

The final rave she threw caught the attention of Professor Purgatory and Sister Splendor, perhaps because of the bands that were playing the party that evening—“The Unholy Acts” and “Curse Word of God”. Sighs of pleasure and shouts of excitement changed to screams of horror that night; the Professor looked on in amusement as Sister Splendor marched through the crowd, slashing away at the revelers with her psychic sword, burning them with her searing inner light, stripping away their humanity with her touch. Maria tried to flee, but was knocked to the floor by other panicked partygoers running for the doors, her legs broken as she was trampled over again and again. Bleeding and broken she could only watch as Sister Splendor stalked towards her. Impulsively, Maria grabbed whatever drugs she still had in her pockets and downed them in a gulp—she wanted to be as far removed from reality as possible when her fate overtook her. Her vision became hazy and her mind started reeling, blackness closing in around the edges. Reality slipped away just as the woman reached out to touch Maria's face with a terrible blazing palm.

Sister Splendor had intended to tear away the willful spirit so obviously evident in the young woman, leaving her just another one of the docile sheep she had created over the years. But something had been different this time—the multiple drugs in Maria's system, the fear-induced adrenalin in the girl's veins, and (very possibly) a set of latent mutant genes had all combined with Sister Splendor's touch to create something much different. The girl's body did not assume the child-like, sexless form of one of the Sister's ‘lambs’—instead her voluptuous shape was transmogrified into the lithe, sharply-muscled physique of an Olympic athlete, but remaining obviously female. After this transformation was complete the young woman rose silently to her feet, never uttering a word of pain, despite the fact that both legs were still clearly broken. She stood ramrod straight, a blank look on her face, as if staring off into some unknowable horizon. As the

remaining guests at the rave continued to shriek in terror and run about screaming, Maria simply continued to stand in place. She was the last person left standing at the end of the carnage, save for the perpetrators of the mayhem—Professor Purgatory and Sister Splendor. Intrigued, the Professor “escorted” Maria back to his lair, where he set about determining the details of her unique condition.

While Maria now shared the mindlessly happy demeanor shown by many of Sister Splendor’s other victims, she apparently retained a normal level of intelligence and alertness. She simply seemed to be completely at peace—utterly serene no matter what was occurring around her. She appeared to lack the capacity for anger, fear sadness, joy, or passion; she could still feel discomfort and pain—she was no more resistant to harm than any other human—but was not impaired by such sensations. The Professor was almost envious—the girl was experiencing a sort of perpetual “Zen Moment”, an oneness with the universe that overwhelmed her connection to the material world.

Further trials showed that Maria’s condition afforded her other, more practical talents as well. Her agility, endurance, and reflexes had been raised to peak human levels. She could sense the presence of people or objects in a 360 degree radius around her, even in complete darkness. She instinctively knew how and where to strike so as to cause the most damage. Most astounding of all, she was very difficult for one to keep track of—even when she was standing in plain sight! Maria was so attuned to the universe that she simply seemed to blend into the background when not directly interacting with other beings.

Best of all, psychological tests showed Maria to be highly suggestible, very open to indoctrination. She had no ego to prevent her indoctrination into the ways of holy justice. She would be utterly fearless and loyal.

The Professor was quite pleased by the results of his tests. The young woman would know the blessing of serving as a foot soldier in his holy army—she had been saved from a life of sin to become a righteous

heroine. He gave Maria over to Sister Splendor, charging his second-in-command to train his latest recruit. After several months of mental and physical conditioning, Maria was deemed ready. Sister Splendor presented her to Professor Purgatory as Sister Tranquility—a meek yet lethal warrior, devoted to the Professor’s cause.

Appearance and Demeanor

Sister Tranquility is one of the few members of the team to maintain a civilian identity (along with Cryptic Star and, rarely, Sister Splendor); Maria’s IQ was unaffected by her transformation, but her mentality did not survive altogether unaltered. She can focus on any task she is given without distraction, working with machine-like efficiency to completion, but she can barely multi-task at all—walking and chewing gum at the same time is literally about the best she can do.

Her mental state precludes employment that demands much beyond rote actions (most of her co-workers assume she is autistic) so she typically holds several low-level jobs at once. She spends most of her free time in an apartment the Professor arranged for her, performing various martial arts or yoga exercises or sitting on the floor watching hours of television. She has little in the way of a normal social life, though she may occasionally eat lunch or share a break-time with fellow employees.

An attractive, endlessly smiling young Hispanic woman in her early twenties, Maria looks entirely normal (and forgettable) working behind a coffee-shop counter, shelving books as a library assistant on weekends, or wearing a janitorial uniform while cleaning up offices on the evening shift. The loose fitting clothing she favors in her Maria Gonzales identity hides her exceptional muscle tone and definition. As Sister Tranquility, Maria wears a tight fitting white tank top with a “smiley face” symbol emblazoned on the chest, white cotton drawstring pants, leather calf-high boots, and metal-studded fingerless leather gloves. Her simple cloth facemask covers the entire top of her face, concealing even her eyes—her Zen-senses allow her to excel in combat despite being blindfolded—and she actually

prefers not to see her opponents, as visual imagery simply distracts her.

Sister Tranquility is normally in a perpetual state of mild bliss. Maria never betrays strong emotions and she always speaks in the same pleasant tone of voice, even when brutally beating an opponent near to death in hand-to-hand combat. The only real ardent feeling she now has is the satisfaction she gets from her service to Sister Splendor and Professor Purgatory (in exactly that order, though the Professor is unaware of this). The program of mental conditioning Sister Splendor put her through has held strong for the last three years, and shows no sign of abating. She cannot be intimidated by anyone, as she has no fear; however, Maria remains vulnerable to suggestion from others—and can be bluffed or deceived by nearly anyone, though she is incapable of doing or believing anything that contradicts what she has been taught by Sister Splendor. In turn, Sister Tranquility is utterly guileless, and cannot lie. It would never even occur to her to do so.

Adventures with Sister Tranquility

A Blind Watcher on the Threshold

A news crew has caught footage of a young woman in an eyeless hood, standing in the doorway of a ruined strip mall just off downtown. She appears to be fighting some kind of monster with her bare hands and feet. As the camera crew watches, she defeats the creature (a horned and hideous nightmare-thing which can't stop giggling through the whole course of the fight) without ever leaving the doorway. She does not pursue the monster as it flees, and continues to stand in the doorway, with a beatific smile on her face.

The police arrive and try to talk to her. She does not react to their presence at all, until one of them gets too close and looks as though he is about to step into the doorway. She takes his gun away and beats him savagely. The other cops try to encircle her, which isn't difficult—the building has huge gaps in its walls so it's easy to just walk around the doorway. She pays no attention to any of them until they try to rush her. Then she defeats them, easily,

without stepping out of the doorway. Her smile never wavers.

More policemen arrive. They try to talk to her with a bullhorn, she makes no response. A SWAT team arrives to take her into custody. She does nothing menacing as they approach her, but the moment they try to grab her she pummels them furiously. They are getting a sniper into position to shoot her when another monster comes running down the street and the police withdraw to safer ground.

The second monster does not resemble the first, although it too is hideous and horrifying. It observes her standing in the doorway, pauses, and then goes around her through one of the holes in the wall. She does not seem to react to its presence and it does not appear again. (the PCs may later learn that it exited through the building's rear door and kept on moving, but this is not evident from the tape).

This footage was shot within the past twenty minutes—the woman is still standing in the doorway right now and the authorities are still baffled as to what they should do. Can the PCs intervene and make sense of this situation before somebody gets hurt badly?

Here's what's really going on. X'Hort, the Cretin and Sister Tranquility led a raid on the library of a doddering old magician named Marlon Gorbles and stole a tome called the Book of Seven Unspeakable Unpleasantnesses. Old Dr. Gorbles isn't very dangerous himself, but the book has its own guardians—a loathsome group of Class 4 Anti-Entities called the Seven Unspeakably Unpleasant Ones, or the Seven Unthinkably Unpleasant Brothers or something like that. They may in fact be brothers, but they don't look much alike. They are certainly unpleasant, however, and they pursued Professor Purgatory's raiding party with zeal.

A few blocks away from Dr. Gorbles' cluttered bungalow, X'Hort decided to try and lose their pursuers by cutting through the ruined strip mall. He told Sister Tranquility to stop anyone who tried to come through the door. He hasn't yet returned home to tell Professor Purgatory how the mission went and no one has given poor Sister Tranquility any other orders, so

she stands on the threshold and stops anyone from entering the door from either side.

If the PCs can find some way to pick the doorway up and move her along with it, she will not resist. There are five more Unspeakably Unpleasant Ones who might show up in the meantime and the police may panic and have a sniper try to shoot her at any moment. Nor has her team completely forgotten about her. Once the Professor hears X'Hort's account of what happened, he is going to want to mount a rescue mission.

What Beats Scissors?

Someone smashes their way into the vaults of one of the oldest and most respected banks in the city—the kind of place where very rich people keep their diamonds and their worst secrets. Only one of the safety deposit boxes was broken open, and the family it belongs to is desperate to have the contents back. So desperate that if the PCs aren't yet investigating the break-in, they have the bank's manager contact them and ask for their help. He isn't willing to reveal the family's name and he doesn't know what was in the box, unfortunately. This is going to make it hard for them to help. If they read his mind or talk him into giving them more information (this takes a Bluff or Diplomacy Check vs. DC 20), the box is owned by an ancient and unbelievably wealthy family of South American land-barons with the improbable last name of O'Higgins. They kept the box here, in this city, because they regarded the contents as too shameful to keep on the same continent.

What can this mean? As the PCs leave the bank, they see Sister Splendor standing on the opposite side of the street. She smiles at them. "God wants you to leave the O'Higgins matter alone" she says. "You wouldn't want to make Our Lord Angry, would you?" A truck passes in front of her and she vanishes.

The PCs have no leads to pursue, but soon another matter crosses their path. Someone who sounds a lot like Sister Tranquility has been kicking the crap out of homeless men down on skid row. Every

night she appears, smiling beatifically, and clobbers some poor wino. If they refuse to defend themselves, she suddenly gives up and finds someone else to beat on. Somebody has got to stop her before she kills somebody.

If the PCs stake out skid row, Sister Tranquility appears that evening, seeking out bums to thump. If the PCs confront her, she doesn't mind telling them why she's doing this.

Professor Purgatory raided the bank in order to steal the Tablets of G'Naaath Bl'Urg—ancient pre-human prophecies from the distant Paleocene. Although some people think the tablets were in fact a clever fraud by a 19th Century South American amateur archeologist and would-be cult leader named Leopold Abshire O'Higgins. Or perhaps a not-very-clever fraud.

The Professor studied the mysterious text and through his immense powers of concentration, he deciphered it. The tablets said that the "supreme warrior of absolute clarity" will soon be defeated by the lowliest of the low. It is not yet a certainty, but when it happens, the destiny of the Mightiest shall at last become plain to him.

Professor Purgatory was shocked. Clearly this prophecy refers to him! He sent out Sister Tranquility to find the lowest of the low and see if they defeat her. Sister Tranquility has had no luck so far, she admits. But the Professor has always said that the PCs are the lowest form of life, she notes. Will one of them be willing to fight her?

Here is an opportunity to capture a member of the Ordo Ultima! And one who is too spaced-out to be afraid of revealing what she knows about the group, at that! If she defeats any of the PCs she says "you are not low enough" and turns to the next one "are you the lowest?" she calmly asks.

Whatever the outcome, it may not matter. Earlier today the Cretin beat her at Rock-Scissors-Paper and tonight the President of the United States will learn that he has cancer. Because there is no way for the PCs to learn this directly, the GM should just say it to the players as an off-handed remark—the voice of the Narrator talking.

X'HORT THE CONVERTED



Quote: <deep, guttural drawl> “*Pro-fess-or Pur-ga-tor-y say you need be pun-ished. So now I do this that. Then I earn my place in Par-a-dise.*”

PL: 10

Real Identity: X'Hort the Converted (at least this is the closest equivalent in 21st Century English)

Dual Identity: None. Makes no effort to keep his real name secret (but is unknown to most inhabitants of the Earth)

Group Affiliation: The Ordo Ultima

Nationality: As an extradimensional non-human, X'Hort is not a citizen of any nation on Earth, and if he is arrested his ambiguous legal status will create all kinds of complications.

Height: 5'8"

Weight: 400 pounds

Hair Color: None

Eye Color: Yellow, with no visible pupils

Age: 26

Str: 34 (+12) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 24 (+7)

Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 14 (+2)

Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 10

Defense: 8 **Toughness Save:** 10 (3

Impervious, 7 without his armor)

Fortitude Save: 10 **Reflexes Save:** 5

Willpower Save: 5

Skills: Intimidate 8 (+10), Knowledge (tactics) 6 (+6), Survival 9 (+10), Notice 11 (+12), Search 8 (+9)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Chokehold, Diehard, Endurance, Equipment 3 (As war-chief, X'Hort as his pick of gear), Fearless, Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Leadership, Move-by Attack, Power Attack, Second Chance (on failed Fort saves to resist disease or poison), Takedown Attack, Tracking

Powers: Device (Flying Platform [Flight 9]), Device (Q-Rifle or Vibro-Axe [Blast 9; Alternate Powers: Snare; Alternate Powers: Stun 9 with Extra: Ranged; Flaw: Daze; Strike 9 with Extra: Penetrating; PF: Thrown]). Device (Armor [3 Impervious Protection]), Immunity 3 (chemical, cold, heat, high pressure, vacuum; Flaw: Limited—suffers half effect from listed conditions), Immunity 2 (critical hits), Super-Strength 1 (Maximum Lift: 3 tons), Super-Senses (Low-Light Vision) 1

Complications: Completely loyal to Professor Purgatory.

Drawbacks: Moderately Vulnerable to Bluff attempts and Illusions (woefully naïve), Weakness—must consume a minimum ten pounds of heavy metals (gold, iron, lead) per day or suffer cumulative -1 Con each day thereafter.

Background and History

X'Hort is a Borderer, a member of a genetically-engineered species that hails from a far-off alternate world. The Borderer race was created to serve as soldiers and servants for that dimension's ruling species—but the Borderers ultimately proved better suited for survival than their masters, as the race managed to escape the cataclysm that spelled an end for intelligent life in their continuum. Following the extinction of their creators the Borderers commandeered a few of their former masters' plane-spanning ships and fled,

scattering across the spectrum of realities. For centuries the race has existed through looting, stealing, and scavenging, planar-pirates raiding the holdings of more advanced races. Despite their familiarity with the technology of their ships, the race is not terribly intelligent, their thoughts mostly concerned with food, shelter, and reproduction, and few Borderers are concerned with anything more than the immediate needs of the present.

X'Hort was an atypical Borderer, considerably smarter and far more imaginative than the majority of his race. As strong and capable as he was smart, X'Hort distinguished himself as a warrior at an early age. His tactics were far more sophisticated than those of most Borderers and he evidenced a talent for anticipating problems that might arise during raids or scouting missions. He was a raiding-party leader by age 20 and a war-chief two years after that. Yet something was...missing. X'Hort felt emptiness inside. More self-aware than any of his kinsmen, he alone felt discontent with the simple pleasures of life. But he had no real hope of anything more besides the existence he knew. In fact, he could scarcely even hope to live out his allotted span—the inter-dimensional vessel the Borderers relied upon was slowly breaking down, and none among them had the skills needed to repair its mechanisms.

Fortunately for their race, Professor Purgatory happened upon their ship while exploring the far reaches of the planes (in pursuit of some bit of esoteric knowledge or other); recognizing the possibilities offered by a race bred for servitude, the Professor offered to restore their vessel to working order in return for their obedience. The Borderers readily pledged their fealty in return for the restoration of the ship (which the Professor rechristened the *Paradise Delayed*), but few felt any real loyalty to Professor Purgatory. They served out of respect for his obvious intellect and power, but he was an alien to them—and he constantly ranted on about concepts of honor, morality, and afterlife...all of which were lost on the Borderers, whose lives centered on simple day to day survival. Lost on all the Borderers save one, that is.

X'Hort was fascinated by the words of the tall, pale alien with the flame-red hair. It seemed obvious to him that the Professor's claim to be a special being—an angel—had to be true. The Professor could do things even the old race of masters could not—and he had saved them all when their ship begun to shut down—it must be that the Professor had been led to them by some great Creator, one beyond all others. It all made sense to X'Hort, even if his kinsmen could not seem to understand. Moreover, X'Hort felt a strange pride in serving the Professor, even more than when he was made a chieftain. He was now fighting for a greater being, a greater cause than mere survival—and if he did well, did as the Professor bade him, someday he would be taken to a Paradise where he would know no want—and where he would be with the great Creator, who would care for him as the old race of creators had cared for all the Borderers.

X'Hort approached Professor Purgatory after one of the Professor's characteristic pseudo-religious rants and told the occult-engineer that he understood the Professor's words—and that he could feel the truth of them, even if he could not see or touch what Professor Purgatory described. X'Hort swore that he would follow the Professor wherever he led, would do anything the Professor asked; he begged the alien sorcerer to accept him as a personal body-servant/guardsman.

The Professor at first hesitated; while he had no problem assuming the role of overlord for the Borderers, taking on X'Hort as a devotee was another matter. Professor Purgatory was not even certain the race had souls, for they had been created, nor spawned naturally. But the young warrior's enthusiasm won him over—after all, was it not evidence of divine will in all things that such a simple creature hoped to earn a place in Heaven? And would not others of his race come to salvation through the example set by X'Hort? Obviously he had been meant to find the ailing vessel and serve as a missionary to these creatures—Professor Purgatory could see that clearly now. He accepted X'Hort's offer. But if the Borderer was to make a suitable acolyte

then certain changes would need to be enacted. If X'Hort was to directly serve a celestial being such as he, then X'Hort would have to be made apart from the common herd. To this end, Professor Purgatory immersed X'Hort in an alchemical bath of the Professor's own design; a treatment intended to amplify X'Hort abilities well beyond those of his kindred.

The experiment altered the balance between the organic and inorganic elements of the young Borderer's make-up. All Borderers are partially composed of metallic/mineral compounds, accounting for their greater than human strength and toughness. This aspect of Borderer physiology was brought to the forefront through the Professor's alchemical process. The resulting change in X'Hort's metabolic processes somewhat increased his strength and greatly enhanced his stamina and resistance to harm. While still not invulnerable—X'Hort can still be harmed by blows, bullets, fire and the like—he suffers far less damage from such attacks than a normal Borderer (making him truly impressive by human standards). He can shrug off injuries that would incapacitate lesser beings and engage in heavy exertions for hours without tiring. The only downside for the young Borderer was that he now needed to consume copious amounts of metals and raw minerals each day, or he would begin to weaken; his entire race shared this characteristic to an extent, but X'Hort's appetite had been increased along with his other physical abilities.

To complement his servant's newfound attributes, Professor Purgatory supplied X'Hort with a Modulated Q-Wave Phase Cannon—a formidable sidearm capable of generating several potent energy effects (the Professor had confiscated the weapon years earlier from a fallen foe, the superhero Cosmic-Naut). He further equipped X'Hort with an amplified version of a typical Borderer energy-axe and a sleeker, faster version of a Borderer flying sky-platform. X'Hort now serves the Professor as an acolyte/strong-arm henchman/odd-job man.

Appearance and Demeanor

X'Hort's physical characteristics are largely those of a typical Borderer male—he stands 5'8" tall (slightly above average for his race), with a Neanderthal-like build; his blocky body is completely hairless, he has four fingers on each hand and two toes on each stump-like foot, and his massive shoulders are rounded, giving him a hunched-over stance. He has pupil-less yellow eyes and crude, nearly unfinished-looking facial features. X'Hort is even more thickly-built and rugged looking than the average Borderer warrior, his muscles swollen near to bursting from under his skin. He is as strong as a Borderer can possibly be, making him several times stronger than an average human.

His one truly distinguishing attribute is his skin color. Most Borderers range in color from dull grey to metallic blue, but X'Hort's tough hide is almost silver in hue, streaked with bands of gold, crimson, and emerald green. This reflects the change in X'Hort's physiology to one less organic in nature.

X'Hort's intelligence level is slightly below human average, making him a genius by the standards of his race. As noted above he has a vivid imagination. Unlike others of his race he has the capacity for abstract thinking and can picture possibilities beyond his present surroundings, but he lacks the mental tools needed to discriminate between what is plausible and what is simply incredible. X'Hort is easily enraptured by imaginative stories—myths, fables, and even children's fairy tales.

X'Hort is fanatically devoted to Professor Purgatory. He subscribes completely to the Professor's warped theology, and actively exhorts the band of Borderer warriors he leads to worship the Professor as he does. While none of them really comprehend the concept of religious faith, they feign belief out of respect for the Professor's sheer power and X'Hort's capable leadership. X'Hort never tires in his efforts to make the others understand what he has come to believe. It is possible that with extreme effort and patience he could be made to understand some of the contradictions in Professor Purgatory's

theological beliefs, converted to a more forgiving version of monotheism, but it would likely require a figure as charismatic and persuasive as the Professor to do so.

Adventures With X'Hort

1) You Will Believe a Man Can Die

X'Hort is puzzled by mankind. Can they fly or not? Some of the ones he has fought can fly. Some of the ones he has served beside can fly. Can regular people fly? If they can, then why do they build stairs?

He asks Professor Purgatory, can Man fly? Alas, the Professor's misunderstands X'Hort and doesn't realize that he means the question literally. His answer is all about the ascension of the human spirit and the soul's upward rise toward Grace. X'Hort can't grasp any of it, but he doesn't dare admit that he doesn't understand.

Because the Professor made it sound important, X'Hort decides to see for himself what percentage of the human population can actually fly. In order to be sure, he reasons, he will have to take some people and put them in a situation where they absolutely have to fly, where they just don't have the option to conceal it. So he gathers together a group of Borderers and makes his way across the dimensional barriers to the PCs' home city. They crash through the bay windows of a skyscraper's rooftop restaurant, secure the exits and detain all the humans they find there.

X'Hort has each human brought to him in turn. "Can Man fly?" he asks. Regardless of their answer (most of them are too scared and confused to do anything but sob) he throws them out the window. None of them can fly (unless a PC who can is in the room). This process takes a while, for he takes copious notes on each case (these are just meaningless scribbles—X'Hort can't read, but he has watched Professor Purgatory enough to know that taking notes is part of the process).

The police mistake this for a hostage situation, cordon off the area and try to negotiate with X'Hort. His only response to their overtures is to ask them if

Man can fly. Clearly this is a situation for the PCs, whether they can fly or not.

Forgiveness

Professor Purgatory decides to punish X'Hort for his poor performance on a recent raid. He is to learn the lesson of shame, by surrendering himself to the Player Characters. He will present himself at their headquarters if there is any way for Professor Purgatory to know where it is. If not, he goes to a public place and starts smashing things until they arrive. Then he surrenders to them, explaining that Professor Purgatory commands it. This is his penance for smashing the pretty thing that the Professor wanted him to take home (a small alabaster statue of St. Catherine by Fra Fillipo, it got broken while X'Hort and his Borderers were removing it from a private collection in Europe).

How will the Player Characters deal with X'Hort? Do they have somewhere to imprison him? Do they turn him over to the authorities? Is he even wanted for any crimes? And would it be legal to prosecute an alien if he is?

But there is an extra twist. X'Hort didn't mention that the Professor has only sentenced him to this punishment for three days. At the end of that time, X'Hort is forgiven and he need endure his captivity no longer. He will announce this the moment exactly three days have transpired, and will try to smash his way loose. The GM should contrive to make this happen at the least convenient possible time for the PCs—while X'Hort is being transported into custody, while he is standing in front of a judge (and a lot of potential hostages and/or innocent victims) while he's inside the PCs' secret headquarters, etc.)

THE CRYPTIC STAR



Quote: *"True heroes use the power they have at their disposal—like this!"*

PL: 13

Real Identity: Darren Cochran (but after using up his original body his consciousness has worn the bodies of nearly a dozen young men and burnt them all out)

Dual Identity: Although it's not known to the general public, he makes no particular effort to keep his identity a secret.

Group Affiliation: The Ordo Ultima

Nationality: American

Height: Varies according to whose body he is presently using.

Weight: Varies according to whose body he is presently using.

Hair Color: Varies according to whose body he is presently using (but always soon turns gray).

Eye Color: Varies according to whose body he is presently using.

Age: 51 (but often wears the bodies of men who are much younger)

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 16 (+3) **Con:** 14 (+2)

Int: 18 (+4) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 10 (+0)

Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 12

Defense: 10 (5 if he is caught flatfooted)

Toughness Save: 13 (10 Impervious, 3 without Force Field)

Fortitude Save: 8 **Reflexes Save:** 8

Willpower Save: 10

Skills: Bluff 5 (+5), Intimidate 9 (+9), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 3 (+7), Knowledge (Earth Sciences) 10 (+14), Knowledge (Life Sciences) 10 (+14), Knowledge (Physical Sciences) 16 (+20), Notice 5 (+7), Search 5 (+7)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Dodge Focus 5, Evasion, Move-By Action, Power Attack, Redirect, Takedown Attack, Taunt

Powers: Device (Star-Shard, hard to lose; Effects: Absorption 13 [Electromagnetic attacks], Blast 15 [Alternate Powers: Dazzle-sight sense group; Drain—one electricity based power at a time; Extra: Ranged; Illusions (sight-sense group); Telekinesis], Flight 6 [maximum speed: 500 mph], Force Field 10 [Impervious], Regeneration 5 [Resurrection; Extra: Reincarnation], Super-Senses 5 [Darkvision, Infravision, Radio Reception, Ultravision])

Drawbacks: Power Loss (the power of the Star-Shard temporarily fails him when it is hit by attacks with the Descriptors "Vibratory" or "Sonic"), Power Loss (Must have hands free to adjust belt controls to access Alternate Powers in array), Weakness—must assume a new host body whenever current shell burns out, or suffer a cumulative -1 on all physical traits (Str, Dex, Con, attack bonus, Defense, physical skill checks) each day.

Background and History

In early 1985, a short-lived southwestern super-team known as the Advance Wave (often simply called the Advance, for short) put an end to the criminal career of the Deadly Diamond, a super-villainess infamous for murdering the well-known hero the Ring Bearer, a crime witnessed by millions live on national TV. The relatively inexperienced

members of the Advance team got a little lucky and succeeded in getting the drop on Deadly Diamond and capturing her, where many more experienced heroes failed. Her capture and the revelation that she was secretly Karen Davis, a high-powered female executive and heir to the Davis Steel fortune made national news—the first and only time the Advance ever made the big time. The team broke up shortly thereafter, for unrelated reasons.

Federal Authorities took Ms. Davis into custody, along with the pulsating, impossibly-angled gemstone (which was not actually a diamond) that granted her powers. After a protracted trial, Karen Davis was declared Not Guilty By Reason of Insanity (her father's lawyers were quite good—but in fact the jewel had really driven her mad); she spent the next seven years in confinement and/or intensive therapy, and wrote a best selling memoir after her release, going on to found a non-profit foundation, the Ring of Caring (dedicated to the memory of the Ring Bearer). The fate of the gem is far more interesting.

The stone was taken into federal custody, where it was given into the possession of the newly formed the fledgling Paranormal Defense Institution, a newly formed government agency dedicated to coming up with solutions to the external and internal threats posed to the U.S. by extra-normal individuals and objects. There the gemstone was given over to a research team headed up by Dr. Darren Cochran. The team was tasked with the job of unlocking the properties of the stone. Although only 39 years old he was quite young to be put in charge of such an important assignment, he came from a wealthy, politically well-connected family, which was always a consideration, especially in Washington, D.C. Dr. Cochran's father was a former Virginia state attorney general, and his two brothers served in the state legislature. His sister was a partner in one of the city's most powerful lobbying firms. Darren would likely have gone into politics as well, except that he lacked the requisite skills at public relations—he was the brightest member of his family, but the least socially adroit by far. All the Cochran family

had been raised to believe in a “natural aristocracy” that men and women of superior intellect and ability deserved to govern, unfettered by any limits that “those of lesser faculties” attempted to impose upon them. Such individuals actually had the duty to wield power in order to improve society—it was their responsibility to act in the best interests of all, even if others could not recognize the rightness of their actions. But while all the Cochrans bought into this, only Darren was open and outspoken about his beliefs, even to the point of being confrontational. The others disguised their arrogance and ambition behind a veneer of “noblesse oblige”, the need for the privileged to put their talents to use for the public good. Darren lacked the diplomatic skills of his kin, which was what led him to a career in science, where he had no need to conceal his contempt for those of lesser ability or drive. Needless to say, he made few friends, even among fellow scientists, but his expertise and intelligence were always undeniably impressive.

Despite his youth, the questionable circumstances behind his appointment, and the way many of his subordinates hated him, PDI officials had every confidence he would discover how the gem operated. Dr. Cochran was focused, superlatively well educated, and often brilliant in his observations. And by cracking the mystery of the gemstone, he might give them broader insights into the principles behind arcane artifacts in general.

Dr. Cochran would indeed unlock the stone's secrets, but the final results would not be what his superiors hoped for. After only two years of study, Darren Cochran announced he had discovered many of the mysteries behind the gemstone. While he still was unable to identify the molecular composition of the gem, he believed the key to its powers lay in its arcane geometry. He believed that contemplation of the non-Euclidian angles of the gem was what allowed its user to tap into mystic energies—but his studies also convinced him that pondering such n-dimensional angles on a regular basis inevitably warped the user's mind, leading to increasingly aggressive, even violent

behavior. Dr. Cochran's concluded that only a mentality already disposed to hate and violence could tap the full power of the gem—which he had nicknamed 'The Eye', (due to the glowing orb in its center). Still, Dr. Cochran believed he hit upon a solution for this problem. He would replicate the gem's properties in another jewel, one with a somewhat more comprehensibly sane configuration to its facets. Attempting to reshape the original gem was too risky—it might be destroyed in the process. Instead Dr. Cochran and his team used giant laser to split off a tiny splinter of the gem to use as a seed. Then they placed the tiny fragment in a solution designed to form crystals, crystals which would align their molecular vibrations with those of the gem-splinter. Each day for the next six months, Dr. Cochran spent a minimum of four hours each day standing watch over the coalescing crystalline formation, concentrating upon the proper arrangement of its lines and planes, mentally nudging it into the proper shape. When the process was complete, the scientist was overjoyed to see that the newly created jewel had formed exactly congruent to his mental image—a hexagonal gem with a star-shaped pattern in the middle. Fittingly, he named his creation the Star-Shard.

Completely unexpectedly, the original gem, the one that led to all of the events described above, had fallen entirely quiescent after the creation of the Star-Shard. PDI researchers could no longer detect any trace arcane energy in the stone. As test after test indicated the gem was now merely a hunk of crystal, the researchers catalogued the stone, packing it away in storage—where it was quickly forgotten by the PDI staff. In 1998 the D.C. branch of PDI changed offices, and a simple clerical error accidentally sent the gem (which was, of course, the now infamous Eye of Rage and Splendor), to the Idaho address of one Tyler Strang—a man who used the no-longer dormant stone to become the original Hand of Pain and Glory (for more on the Hand of Pain and Glory, see Plain Brown Wrapper's *13 Shades of Darkness*).

Dr. Cochran's superiors at the agency were more than pleased with the

results of his research. They told him they had plans to immediately proceed with phase two of the project: using Dr. Cochran's creation to create a brand new government sponsored superhero, tentatively code-named the American Star. They even had a candidate in mind—Lt. Hale Jorgenson, a decorated Special Forces veteran. When informed of their intentions, Darren was appalled; they were going to turn his creation over to some jock, a mere soldier? The Star-Shard should only be used by the right sort of individual—an individual who would not be afraid to use the immense power it promised to the fullest, to use the incredible abilities it would grant to truly impact the world, an individual such as Darren Cochran. Dr. Cochran presented his case to his superiors, emphasizing that a man of science could put the Star-Shard to far better use, and that his already existing para-psychological connection to the artifact made him the most suitable choice. He was predictably turned down—and just as predictably approved once he contacted his father about the matter.

Darren threw himself into his new role, immersing himself in the U.S. training program for federally sponsored super-beings. He rapidly began exploring the meta-human abilities open to him. By tapping into the power of the Star-Shard, Darren could absorb and redirect electromagnetic energies; he could use said energies to fly, generate dazzling bursts of light, emit destructive pulses of radiation and deflect solid objects by warping gravity. He could also "see" across a broad swath of frequencies, including infrared, ultraviolet, and even radio. Better yet, the more he exercised his powers, the more invigorated he became—the constant flow of energy supercharged his body. Formerly, Darren had the puny musculature of a skinny, desk-bound scientist whose otherwise lanky frame was rapidly growing soft in the middle from too much chair sweat and creeping middle age. But his physique began to transform, becoming younger, stronger, and more robust each day. His biceps bulged and his waist shrank while his hair and jaw-lines filled out. The only real weakness of the shard was its vulnerability to the effects

of “sympathetic oscillation”, i.e. simple vibration. Exposing the shard to intense vibrations throw off its crystal matrix, causing its powers to wane.

Darren dutifully donned the requisite distinctive costume, though he insisted on changing the color scheme to more menacing hues, and effected a slight name change as well. In any event, a new crusader appeared on the scene—the Cryptic Star, Master of Arcane Energies! Engaging in several flashy crime-fighting episodes and high-profile rescues, the Star was initially a hit with the citizens of the nation’s capitol. His good looks, impressive powers, and unbridled self-confidence resulted in a lot of favorable coverage early on. But it soon became clear that the Star lacked the caution and restraint displayed by other superheroes—he lost his temper easily, was often reckless and prone to using excessive force, even against obviously outmatched or already defeated opponents. And when he actually find himself in a tough battle against a brute called the Lump he cut loose without regard for those around him, resulting in several badly injured civilians and a few million dollars in property damage. His popularity plummeted, and local authorities began raising noises about actually bringing charges against him. His government handlers advised him to lie low for awhile.

Darren sloughed off such concerns. The public would eventually come around to his way of doing things, once they saw that he got results. He actually became even rougher in his treatment of even non-powered criminals, drug dealers, pimps, and muggers. He then began aggressively and preemptively policing low income neighborhoods, rousting their inhabitants at random. His escalating methods provoked complaints, protests, and finally police action. He clashed several times with the cops and even other super-heroes, becoming increasingly angry and confused by their responses. Other heroes held back, and where did that get them? The super-criminals they put in prison escaped again and again to endanger innocent lives. Street crime remained out of control. And what about other transgressors—those who

despoiled the environment, polluted the airwaves with mind-numbing garbage, brought down the quality of life for everyone? Didn’t everyone see that something had to be done by those who had the power?

Apparently they did not. Warrants were issued for his arrest. PDI disavowed knowledge of his actions, then dispatched a team of retriever agents to take him out—he barely avoided their assassination attempt against him, though he had to destroy his entire apartment building to make good his escape, killing twenty people (not really his fault of course—the government shouldn’t have tried to murder him). Even Darren’s family turned their backs—his beloved sister said he was dead to her (and he didn’t mean to put her in a wheelchair for life—but she tried to call the police and he just hit her with too much energy...)

The Cryptic Star’s tactics became even crueller and more unpredictable. He began brutalizing even minor scofflaws—petty drug dealers, graffiti artists, as well as more upscale targets like criminal defense attorneys, fast-food industry lobbyists, and politicians who pushed funding cuts in scientific funding or fine arts programs. His reputation as a hero was completely destroyed. He didn’t have a friend in the world. Soon he was being hounded by super-heroes, super-villains, the police, and the PDI.

The truth was that Dr. Cochran’s designs were not as good as he thought. The Star-Shard was amplifying all the worst traits of his own personality. Even worse, the most serious flaw in Dr. Cochran’s synthetic power-gem quickly became evident. The Star-Shard’s configuration was unstable—the shard’s energies began overtaxing the cells of his body, causing accelerated aging. Within a few weeks, the Cryptic Star went from a youthful looking thirty-three year old to an arthritic senior citizen, plagued with glaucoma and diabetes. Deciding to go out in a literal blaze of glory, the now elderly Cryptic Star fly out over the Potomac River and issued a showy challenge to the authorities, daring them to apprehend him. His challenge was answered by the Capitol Defense Corps, D.C.’s then resident

hero team. At the climax of an aerial battle above the river, Cryptic Star deliberately channeled far more energy through the Star-Shard than he could possibly handle, resulting in an explosion that killed one member of the Capitol Defense Corps and crippled two others. His body was disintegrated instantly and the Star-Shard fell into the river below, disappearing underneath its currents. This was the last anyone heard of the Cryptic Star for the next fifteen years.

Unknown to all, the explosion had somehow imprinted Darren's mind upon the Star-Shard's crystal matrix. While his body was gone, his mind lived on beneath the river, seething with hatred and fantasies of vengeance. Miraculously, he was granted the chance to realize these fantasies when the mystic jewel washed up on the banks of the Potomac. It was thoughtless picked up by a homeless schizophrenic. That very night Darren's mind began telepathically calling out to the poor man, whispering of power and pleasure. After two weeks of this insidious seduction, the man signaled his acceptance by grasping the stone and begging it to fulfill its promises, Darren psychically burned out the man's mind and assumed control over his body. The Cryptic Star was reborn!

The Star immediately began to reacquaint himself with the world. After getting his bearings, his first act was to casually blow a hole through the wall of the nearest bank, stuff his pockets with several hundred thousand dollars, and fly off laughing. After a few days of luxury in one of the city's finest hotels, he set about taking his revenge on those who had wronged him, beginning with PDI. During his stay at the bottom of the river, he realized that his colleagues had been jealous of him, and had sabotaged his research. That was what caused the Star-Shard to age him so quickly—and also why he felt so angry and restless all the time. He would annihilate PDI, destroy their facilities across the country, decimate their staff, and obliterate their research, no matter how long it took.

His nation-wide "scorched earth" rampage against PDI is what attracted the

attention of Professor Purgatory. The Professor had long held a grudge against PDI for appropriating a number of schematics they found in one of his abandoned lairs. He recognized his handiwork in several of their more advanced designs (crude imitations though they were). He saw a potential ally in the Star, and began monitoring the man. The more he saw, the more the Professor liked. When he wasn't pursuing his vendetta against PDI, the Cryptic Star was usually busy beating a random super-villain to a bloody pulp (though of course the Star supported himself through robbery and theft), melting the skin off the residents of crack dens, or mutilating so-called "celebutantes" who were famous for no good reason at all.

The Professor recruited Cryptic Star when the latter was trapped in a rough spot. The Star was in the midst of combat with a pair of three small-time mercenary villains, Captain Larceny, Bombast, and the Mind Mauler (he had earlier put their brother the Hound into intensive care) when three fully armored PDI retriever squads arrived, backed up by a police S.W.A.T. team. Even the Star (who was on his third new body by this point) couldn't overcome those odds—until Professor Purgatory stepped in. After the Professor obliterated the opposition, he introduced himself to the Star, explaining that he admired the man's efforts and hoped the Star would consider serving under the Professor's banner. Cryptic Star knew all about the Professor from his days working for PDI. The Professor had been active for at least half a century and no one had ever been able to capture or contain him. Although he didn't like the idea of "serving" anyone, the Star knew he was running out of options. Putting aside his reservations, Cryptic Star accepted and agreed to the Professor's terms, swearing fealty in return for sanctuary from his foes.

Appearance and Demeanor

Six feet tall, well-built, clear-eyed, strong-jawed, and with a head full of thick, lustrous hair, the Cryptic Star looks every inch the All-American hero. Although he has gone through half a dozen hosts since his revival, the power of the Star-Shard (backed by the

willpower of Dr. Darren Cochran) has reshaped every one of his borrowed bodies into the epitome of physical attractiveness. Every incarnation of the Star comes to resemble the others (similar facial features, same eye color, and so on) though on a couple of occasions the Star's race has varied—and a female Cryptic Star also appeared in one instance (Cochran strongly prefers male hosts of his own original ethnicity/race, but beggars can't always be choosers). His youthful appearance lasts only a few months, depending on how frequently he exercises his powers, and then he begins to age rapidly, reaching senescence in a matter of weeks. Fortunately there is never a shortage of weak-willed, lower-class individuals willing to be tempted into handling the Star-Shard, seduced by the promise of power.

The Cryptic Star wears a form-fitting, midnight blue body stocking, topped off with silver gauntlets and boots. His chest emblem consists of three black stars, connected in the form of an inverted triangle, against a field of silver. The Star-Shard used to be set into the Cryptic Star's right-hand gauntlet, but is now housed in the silver metallic belt that circles the Cryptic Star's taut waist. The circuitry in the belt (designed with the assistance of Professor Purgatory) allows Cryptic Star to use his energy powers in novel ways, such as creating holographic images, dampening electrical systems, or levitating heavy objects. Cryptic Star is still exploring the limits of these new capabilities—he still finds bending his powers in these directions rather time-consuming and impractical in combat.

The Cryptic Star is the member of the team least personally committed to Professor Purgatory (aside from the rebellious Regiment); he does not really buy into the Professor's claims of angelic origins. His own research into supernatural phenomena at PDI makes him unable to dismiss such assertions out of hand, but he can personally think of half a dozen more plausible explanations for the Professor's unusual history and extraordinary abilities. Cryptic Star is actually far more liberal when it comes to sexual/social mores than are the

Professor or Sister Splendor, and has little love for most religiously or morally rigid types, whom he sees as retarding progress to a more logical, intellectually advanced society—but as long as he gets the chance to vent his own aggressions against PDI officials, beggars, drug dealers (and addicts), thieves, polluters, purveyors of junk food or puerile entertainment, standard super-villains, and anyone else he has a grudge against, he is more than happy to support the Professor's campaigns as well. There is really nothing Cryptic Star cannot justify or rationalize—in his own mind he is always right.

His arrogance and intolerance make him a lousy team player. When he is called upon to interact with the others, he gets along well enough with Sister Tranquility—she is easy on the eyes and pleasant company, though her eternal cheeriness gets a bit grating. He has a fondness for the Cretin for some reason—perhaps only because he finds the little man so amusing. He has a less than complimentary opinion of Sister Splendor and her constant, tiresome proclamations of piety—Cryptic Star knows enough psychology to recognize that the woman lacks the Professor's sincerity, that she secretly yearns to partake in the pleasures of all flesh. He is smart enough not to antagonize the woman, however. She has the Professor's ear, and much as he loathes admitting it (even to himself), Cryptic Star fears Professor Purgatory too much to do anything that would invite his wrath. He thinks even less of Professor Purgatory's other followers. They are all either occult-engineered grotesqueries or dull-witted alien servitors, after all. When forced to endure their presence, he routinely directs sarcastic insults at X'Hort, the Rage Angels, Legion/Regiment, and the Out-Warder—but he is careful to give the Penitent a wide berth.

The Star serves the Professor for three reasons. First, because doing so affords him much greater license—the Professor's fearsome reputation keeps PDI mostly at bay, and even makes most super-villains wary of going after him, lest they bring Professor Purgatory down on top of them. And even if super-heroes try to bring

him in, he can call on his formidable allies for help. Second, the Professor in principle supports the Star's efforts to elevate society by purging civilization of its worst elements, even though their exact ideas about how to do so do not entirely coincide. Finally, Professor Purgatory has promised that in return for the Star's loyalty, he will create an artificial body for Cryptic Star—one capable of handling the Star-Shard's energies without burning out.

Adventures With the Cryptic Star

1) The First and Last Episode of “the Incredible Double Y”



Ygnacio Ybarra (“Double Y” to his friends) is a mixed-up teenager. The PCs have encountered him at least twice before. The first time he was a bitter dead-end street urchin—not a juvenile criminal they locked up, but a witness or an informant. The second time they met him he was trying hard to turn his life and grades around, get off the street and become somebody who helps people for a living—a policeman or a firefighter or somebody like that. He was struggling but seemed determined.

It looks as though his first encounter with the PCs had a huge effect on him (this is true). He admires them so

much, after having met them, that he wants to model his life on them. This is why he wants to be cop or a fireman. Or a paramedic. They seem like the closest thing to being a superhero.

Of course, it's not easy to become a good kid when you have no place to study, you've never developed any academic skills and your loser friends keep trying to drag you back into their orbit. He thought becoming a born-again Christian might help, but it didn't very much. He's on the verge of giving it all up in despair when someone offers him a shortcut.

Word has gone around the neighborhood. There is a guy looking for someone willing to gain superpowers. Ygnacio has been around the edges of the underworld for long enough to know that this is a recruitment pitch for a supervillain, but he figures that once he gets superpowers, he'll just betray his new boss and use them to go fight crime. He even has a superhero name picked out for himself—he'll be “The Incredible Double Y”. Alas, the new boss is Professor Purgatory and Double Y becomes the newest incarnation of the Cryptic Star.

Ygnacio fights really hard to stay conscious, but the mind of Darren Cochran easily overcomes him. In the course of wrestling with Ygnacio's soul, Dr. Cochran discovers his link to the PCs.

Professor Purgatory hears about this, and decides to make use of it. He sends the Cryptic Star out to fight the Player Characters the very next time they inconvenience his plans, wearing the body of poor Double Y. How will the PCs deal with this threat without killing the Cryptic Star's host? Is there any way to save Ygnacio, or is he doomed? Did they doom him?

2) Arch-Nemesis

Charlie Dorffman is officially a janitor, but in fact he spends most of his work hours playing video games and smoking grass. He spends his off-hours the same way. A cheerful, jovial, doughy failure, he's forty years old but looks like he could be fifty. Charlie is more than he appears to be. He has a secret past.

One of the PCs knows Charlie Dorffman slightly—he works in the same building. They've always thought of him as a good-natured, cheerful nobody. So it's a little unnerving when he approaches them in their super-identity and tells them that a terrible crime is about to be committed.

In 1986, Cryptic Star foiled a bank robbery, routing a gang who for some reason dressed like beatniks. They were amateurs out to have fun and they tried to surrender as soon as the Cryptic Star showed up. He put three of them in the hospital with multiple third degree burns and broke another one's arm. This didn't hurt his public image very much—the press took the position that these were criminals and deserved whatever they got, and most ordinary people agreed. However, he also managed to injure some passers-by. One of them was a high-school athlete named Victor Vaccarro, who spent six months in the hospital and was never the same again. He lost part of an arm, most of the skin from his face and got bone splinters in his brain that give him headaches and seizures to this very day. Twenty years later, he's finally ready to have his revenge.

Vic Vaccarro has trained his damaged body lifting weight with remaining arm, taught himself the art of making explosives, sewed himself a costume and put together a plan. He tried to enlist a former member of the Hepcat Gang who he met on the internet, but the former bank robber wants no part of his evil scheme. This, of course, was Charlie Dorffman. He still has the burn scars on his chest that the Cryptic Star gave him and he's struggled with the post-traumatic stress disorder for the rest of his life. And he's a convicted felon. It's funny, he says. His own life got screwed up about as badly as Vic Vaccarro's, but the idea of taking revenge never even occurred to him. Then he tells them all about Vic's plan.

The next day, Vic appears in his costume on the observation deck of the city's most famous skyscraper. The mask covers most of the scars on his face. He announces that he is Captain Vengeance, and that he will kill everyone in this room if his arch-nemesis, the Cryptic Star, doesn't

come face him right now. Captain Vengeance's costume includes a vest covered with explosives and ball bearings.

Things turn into a hostage situation pretty quickly. SWAT teams surround the building, but Vic is too closely surrounded by his hostages for any of their sharpshooters to get a clear shot at him. Anyway, they're afraid to move in on the building because they don't know what sort of powers he might have.

With any luck the PCs listened to Charlie Dorffman and they already know Captain Vengeance's plan. When the Cryptic Star shows up, Captain Vengeance will try to get to come in close, and then he'll detonate the bomb. They'll both die. So will a lot of innocent people, which Vic figures should humiliate the Cryptic Star even more.

You might think that Darren Cochran would have bigger things to do than to go tangle with the likes of Captain Vengeance. He certainly doesn't care about the hostages. But when he hears about the situation on the news, it irks him. People will think he was a coward if he never shows up. So he does.

The Cryptic Star will arrive shortly after then Player Characters. They won't have long to take out Captain Vengeance and they'll have to do it without hurting the crowd of hostages. The Star won't like it if they beat the villain before he has a chance, and he may try to kill Vic Vaccarro after the PCs have already captured him. And if he does, it will set off the bomb.

SISTER SPLENDOR



Quote: *"The light of truth will burn the sin from you...or reveal it for all to see."*

PL: 14

Real Identity: Lillian Kaplan

Dual Identity: Secret (suspected but unconfirmed by federal law enforcement)

Group Affiliation: The Ordo Ultima

Nationality: American

Height: 5'6"

Weight: 185 pounds

Hair Color: blonde/gray

Eye Color: Hazel

Age: 67

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 14/28 (+2/+8)
Con: 14 (+2) **Int:** 16 (+3) **Wis:** 14 (+2)
Cha: 18 (+4)
Initiative: 18 **Attack Bonus:** 14
Defense: 14 (10 if she is somehow deprived of her "Shield" Power)
Toughness Save: 10 Impervious
Fortitude Save: 10 **Reflexes Save:** 14
Willpower Save: 12

Skills: Bluff 6 (+10), Diplomacy 4 (+8), Intimidate 14 (+18), Notice 8 (+11), Perform (Oratory) 10 (+14), Profession (bookstore owner) 2 (+5), Stealth 3 (+11)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Defensive Attack, Dodge Focus 2, Evasion 2, Fascinate (linked to Perform: Oratory), Improved Block, Improved Defense, Improved Critical (with psi-sword), Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative 2, Inspire, Leadership, Minions 5 (10 or so slavishly devoted PL 2 morons who have been Transformed by her power), Move-By Action, Power Attack, Rage 2, Startle, Takedown Attack, Uncanny Dodge, Weapon Break

Powers: Enhanced Dexterity 14, Flight 5 (Maximum Speed: 250 MPH), Impervious Protection 10, Psi Sword (Weapon, 16 Damage, Power Feats: Alternate Power [Healing 16]), Shield 4 (Power Feat: Alternate Power [Deflect 14; All Ranged Attacks; Extra: Redirection]), Super-Senses 9 (Danger Sense, Precognition, Postcognition), Transform 14 (Physical and Mental; Transforms one narrow group of targets [people] into a narrow group of results [devolved, shambling imbeciles], affects the target's personality, making them slavishly loyal to Sister Splendor and incapable of higher thought, but does not edit their memories; Extra: Continuous; Flaw: Touch)

Complications: Depraved hypocrite. May go into a Rage at any sign of "sin". Or may just dig it.

Background and History

Lillian Kaplan spent her life seeking spiritual fulfillment. The only child of liberal, intellectual parents, she was raised in a permissive environment. Lillian was encouraged to search out her own answers and come to her own value system, with little input from others. She grew up in a Bohemian part of New York City in the late 1950s and experimented with alcohol, marijuana, and sex. Later, as a young woman in the turbulent 1960s, she got involved in the anti-war and civil rights movements—as well as even harder drugs, promiscuity, and fringe religious cults. An experience with LSD awakened her latent

mental mutations, activating Lillian's clairvoyant gifts. Using her newfound abilities she became a minor counter-culture heroine, donning a bright red leotard and calling herself the Scarlet Seer, though she did little in the way of actual super-heroics. She even served briefly with the Young Lions, a little-remembered team of young heroes that operated between 1966 and 1972 (membership was limited to under 30; Lillian lied about her age but was found out and asked to leave in 1971). But Lillian never seemed to make much of an impact, no matter what she tried; she quickly grew bored and whatever passion she had. Nothing that she ever became involved in seemed to satisfy, to ever bring her any real sense of achievement.

By 1980 Lillian was quickly moving into middle-age and was as depressed and dissolute as ever. She had managed to buy and hold on to a small New Age/occult-type bookstore, but her life was otherwise empty; she had never finished her master's degree, she had a string of failed relationships, got high far too often for her own good, and engaged in meaningless intercourse with men she barely knew. Her existence was messy and pointless. But one day Lillian came across something in a translation of an old occult text that she thought might hold the key to turning her entire life around. It described a ritual that would allow an oracle or prophet—one who had psychic powers such as she had—to transcend the physical plane and gaze the true face of the universe. Surely achieving such fantastic insight would bring her the fulfillment she longed for—the meaning of life would be revealed to her! She gathered the materials she needed for the ritual, waited until the constellations were in the proper astrological alignment, and then performed the incantation in the small hours of the night in the foyer of her bookstore.

The ritual worked—Lillian caught a glimpse of the underlying architecture of reality, the perfect symmetry of the cosmos—and her spirit was shattered. She could only think of how insignificant she was compared to the immaculate splendor of the multi-verse. Her life had been squalid, pointless, tawdry, selfish. She was

overcome with shame and self-loathing. Her soul tumbled out of the higher planes and back into the shell of her mortal body. She promptly collapsed, curling into a fetal position on the floor of her bookstore. She was found the next morning by her part-time clerk, still lying on the floor, drooling and staring endlessly at some unknown horizon.

All attempts to bring Lillian back to consciousness failed. She was placed in a psychiatric care center, but several years of treatment failed to produce any noticeable improvement. Lillian was eventually written off as incurable, and when her medical coverage ran out the private facility shuttled her off to a run-down state mental institution. She spent the next decade there in her catatonic state, poorly fed and roughly treated, and would likely have remained so for the rest of her life, had it not been for one overly-lascivious attendant. The orderly attempted to molest the helpless Lillian—but his pleasure was violently interrupted when the woman suddenly, miraculously awoke and slashed him in half with a blade of shimmering golden light. The man's dying screams alarmed the rest of the hospital staff, and Lillian found herself accosted by interns, nurses, and security guards—but not for long. When she exited the blood-spattered doors of the hospital she found herself facing two dozen police officers. Staring down the cops with their guns drawn, Lillian welled up with fury and then exploded with a blinding burst of light. Then she walked away, gingerly stepping over the broken bodies of the police and taking care not to allow her hospital gown to get too close to the burning vehicles.

Once she was alone and relatively calm, Lillian tried to comprehend what had happened—and what she had become. Why had she been thrust back into the world, forced to deal with her own imperfection and ugliness...and everyone else's? How had she come into these frightening new powers? Her mind nearly collapsed again. Then she caught herself. It all made sense now. She had literally seen the light of truth—and been cleansed. Her ordeal was the penalty she had to pay for redemption—and now she

was purified. She had been given power because it was now her mission to cleanse the world around her—to purge the world of the evil that she had once been held in thrall. By doing so she would continue her personal quest to achieve the perfection she had glimpsed. When she was finished she would gain the serenity she so desired.

As Lillian explored her fantastic new abilities, she discovered the celestial light she commanded could blind, burn, or even heal, as Lillian wished; she could even command the light to coalesce into a gleaming scimitar and shining shield, both stronger than tempered steel. Her touch could reveal the sin of others, bringing their evil to the fore and transforming them into bestial brutes. She could also banish sin from human souls, making those she touched docile and meek—true lambs of God...though the mentalities of those she deigned to so elevate did not seem to endure the transition to such an enlightened state very well. Few deserved this gentler version of her touch anyway; Lillian saw corruption and vice nearly everywhere she turned.

Professor Purgatory came across Lillian in Los Angeles roughly five years ago. The Professor was in LA to ascertain the truth behind rumors that a demon had infiltrated the ranks of Hollywood's starlets, bringing a bit of true hell to what was already a den of iniquity. The Professor was never able to confirm the rumors, but the trip to the 'City of Angels' still proved to be a fruitful one. While conducting his investigation he came upon news reports of a female vigilante striking down drug runners, pornographers, and prostitutes across the city. Intrigued, the Professor tracked down the woman and confronted her, determined to ascertain her motives. After a brief battle Professor Purgatory subdued Lillian and questioned her at length; what he learned pleased him beyond measure—here was a human woman who shared his ideals and who had obviously been touched by the Hand of God. The Professor apologized for his iron-fisted tactics, explaining that he only had the best of intentions. He told Lillian of his own long,

hard crusade against sin, and implored her to join him in his mission.

Awed by the Professor's sheer force of personality (as well as by the power at his command) Lillian agreed to serve as his holy handmaiden. Professor Purgatory dubbed Lillian Sister Splendor, as she shone with the brilliance of Heaven itself. Designating her as one of his earthly regents, the Professor outfitted her as a warrior-nun, dressed in a habit of crimson robes, a golden tiara, and a set of silver bracelets.

Sister Splendor serves as Professor Purgatory's second-in-command and primary disciplinarian, keeping the rest of his forces on their toes; while he still regards her as an inferior (after all, she is not truly divine, as he is) Purgatory still sees her as one of the few human beings who have achieved true enlightenment (i.e., adopting his moral code) and earned a special place at his table. In turn, she has glommed on to the Professor as her latest guru, the ultimate authority figure in her life, one whose delusions clarify her own irrational thoughts and justify her actions. Besides, the Professor makes asks little of her, usually allowing her free reign to go about "chastising sinners" as she wishes, whether that means brutalizing scantily-clad music video actresses or beheading heroin peddlers.

Her most infamous act may be the mutilation of the controversial, leather-clad superhero duo Mistress and Masochist, though she was kind (?) enough to leave both alive, after a fashion.

Appearance and Demeanor

Lillian Kaplan appears to be a middle-aged woman—average height, a bit soft in the middle, thickening about the hips and thighs. Her gray hair is cut short and her pale skin is offset by her dark eyes and ruddy cheeks. Most would estimate her as between fifty and fifty-five years of age, though she is actually 67; her aging has slowed considerably since she emerged from her coma, and she can likely long forward to several more decades of robust health and vitality.

Her matronly appearance belies her formidable martial abilities. Exceptionally

nimble and quick, she wields her psychic sword and shield with astonishing skill, surprising many of the younger, fitter opponents she has faced since adopting the role of Sister Splendor.

A Freudian psychiatrist would undoubtedly come to the conclusion that Sister Splendor is engaging in classic projection/repression—she cannot confront and accept her own unworthiness in the face of the perfection that underlies the universe, so instead she denies her own moral flaws and violently seeks out the sins of others, punishing them for their imperfections. Sister Splendor would, of course, consider any such diagnoses as evidence that the one who made it was a liar seeking to corrupt her perfect world view—a liar worthy of serious chastisement.

Despite wearing attire superficially similar to that of a Catholic nun (or at least a nun crossed with an Amazon warrior) Lillian is not Catholic—her father was Jewish, her mother was Unitarian, and she passed through a number of spiritual belief systems during her lifetime. None ever took root in her, until she embraced her current merciless, black-and-white religious philosophy. Lillian finally has a purpose and a mission. Sister Splendor is determined to carry it out. Armed with the zealotry of the converted, she is remorseless in her actions and cannot be dissuaded.

Secretly, Sister Splendor still lusts for many of the vices she pursued in her earlier existence—alcohol, “blasphemous” books, easy sex—she rationalizes that her “purity” is being corrupted by the evil of those around her, which spurs her efforts to cut away such evil. She sometimes plays sadistic games, where she sets up circumstances to tempt others into immoral acts (getting vicarious enjoyment in the process), then revels in punishing them.

Acts that she finds particularly offensive (displays that mock “traditional” morality, expressions of sexuality in public, activities that “corrupt” children) send her into blind rages. When she enters such a state she is both more erratic and more dangerous than normal.

Adventures With Sister Splendor

1) Perdition's Flame

Sister Splendor goes for a little stroll through the vice district of the PCs' home city. She's here to see how awful the strip clubs and adult bookstores are for herself. After she has seen it to her heart's content, she sets the entire five-block neighborhood on fire and settles back to hear the screams. Pretty soon the blaze is wildly out of control and a substantial portion of town is on fire. It is in fact the worst fire the city has seen in years. That's not what Sister Splendor really intended—she just got lucky.

But just as she's starting to wonder if perhaps she should help put the fire out, who should come along but Misery. Drawn to the fear and suffering created by the blaze, he starts forcing back emergency vehicles and hurling people who are trying to escape into the flames. An orphanage for retarded children is right in the path of the fire and Misery is eager to hear what it sounds like as it goes up.

Sister Splendor is annoyed. This is her party, not Misery's. Anyway he's clearly an unsavory creature of darkness and the fact that they are both digging on the same stuff makes her feel...uncomfortable.

The PCs arrive just as Sister Splendor and Misery start to fight. Should the PCs focus on the grappling titans or on rescuing people and putting out the fire? If they do intervene in the battle, which side do they take? Who started the fire?

If they help Sister Splendor drive Misery away, then how do they keep her from looking like a hero afterwards?

2) Family Values

Teen pop idol Cameron Charm is scheduled to play a concert in the PCs' home city. With his wispy, effeminate good looks and non-threatening stage persona, his syrupy love songs have made him the idol of pre-teen girls everywhere, while annoying nearly everyone else. But he has at least one devoted fan who doesn't quite fit the target demographic...

It's going to be a big show for both Cameron and the city—this is his home town, so he's getting even more attention than usual from the media. Coverage is relentless. Just as the PCs are about to go nuts from all

the Cameron hype, the star disappears. The police are trying to keep it quiet, but the PCs can discover that his bodyguard was found dead, in three separate pieces.

There is nearly a riot when Cameron fails to show up for the gig. Two days later he turns up at his parents' house, tries to shoot them both, fails, and flees, weeping. As he leaves his parents' home a police car drives past and gets blown apart by a bolt of light. Is Cameron a parahuman? If he can blow up police cars, why did he try to shoot his parents with a gun? He vanishes again.

While the PCs are interviewing Cameron's parents (who are as baffled and horrified as anyone would expect) Cameron suddenly bursts into the house and tries to finish them off. He is holding a shotgun this time. PCs who keep their heads may notice that the little finger is missing from his left hand.

If the PCs don't cut him down instantly, Cameron drops the gun and thrown himself, weeping at their feet. "She made me! She made me!" he screams. "She said she'd cut off more of my fingers! She said it's their fault I'm gay!"

Before the PCs have time to react, Sister Splendor tears the ceiling off the room and swoops on them.

Here's what's really been going on. Sister Splendor has become fascinated by Cameron and his sweet, boyish purity. He must be a virgin, she's sure of it. When he came to the PCs' home city, she snuck into the venue. She didn't want to do anything crazy, she just wanted to see him and feel close to him. But it became very clear from watching him back stage that he was gay—and no virgin. Sister Splendor determined to rescue him and show him the light of truth. So she killed his bodyguard and kidnapped him.

Cameron was already a born-again Christian, she discovered. This baffled her. It must be his parents' fault, she decided. They were the ones responsible for the corruption of this innocent little lamb. Perhaps if he killed them it would purify his soul.

All this will come out in the ensuing battle. Sister Splendor will be very careful not to hurt Cameron, but she has no such

compunctions about his parents. PCs who think to take Cameron as a hostage themselves can make her back down instantly, or even surrender.

The Penitent



Quote: "Aaaaaa...Uh...Uh...H-Huuurts...Uh..."

PL: 15

Real Identity: Jack Christian

Dual Identity: Unknown to the public at large.

Group Affiliation: The Ordo Ultima

Nationality: American

Height: 7'6"

Weight: 350 pounds (in armor)

Hair Color: Brown with grey highlights

Eye Color: Brown

Age: 33

Str: 14/34 (+2/+12) **Dex:** 10 (+0)

Con: 14/34 (+2/+12) **Int:** 10 (+0)

Wis: 16 (+3) **Cha:** 20 (+5)

Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus:** 10

Defense: 8

Toughness Save: 15 Impervious

Fortitude Save: 15 **Reflexes Save:** 3

Willpower Save: 3 (9 vs. Mental Attacks)

Skills: Intimidate 10 (+15), Notice 1 (+4)

Feats: Fearsome Presence 2, Power Attack, Startle

Powers: Blast 15 (Extra: Area [75 foot radius]; Flaw: Uncontrolled), Enhanced Strength 20, Immunity 9 (to Aging, Cold, Disease, Heat, Poison, Pressure, Starvation, Suffocation [Does Not Breathe]), Mental Blast 10 (Flaws: Limited [only works on targets who try to read his mind], Uncontrolled [automatically attacks anyone who tries to read his mind]), Mind Shield 6, Nemesis 15, Protection 15 (Impervious)

Complications: Constantly in hideous pain, incapable of focusing on much else or making a coherent plan of action.

Note on the Penitent's Powers: Because the Wishing Man armor is permanently grafted to his flesh, it does not count as a "Device." If the Penitent were to somehow get extracted from it, he would lose his powers (and be very grateful) but as of yet no one but Professor Purgatory has any idea how to do this.

Background and History

The origin of the Penitent began with one of the strangest and least-known episodes in the career of Professor Purgatory. On a day not unlike many others for the Professor, he was conducting an esoteric experiment in one of his occult laboratories, attempting to construct a basic matter transporter by arranging a series of mirrors in a 4th-dimensional geometric pattern. But when the Professor activated the device he found himself not directly outside his lair, as he had intended—but instead in the middle of a decimated city, standing amidst a heap of broken stone and charred human remains. About him raged a battle between uniformed soldiers, a handful of costumed individuals, and an army of winged demons! Professor Purgatory instinctively knew which side of the battle he was meant to fight on, and threw himself into pitched battle with the flying horrors. With his aid, the tide was turned and the human warriors were victorious.

The costumed men introduced themselves as the remnants of the Justice Congress of America, in what had formerly been the United States of Righteousness. The local year was 1954. They explained that since 1941 America had been waging a

losing war against the Axis of Chaos, an alliance of nations that embraced the baleful power of diabolism. The Axis had the armies of the abyss at its command, and the heroes of the benevolent theocratic nations had been overwhelmed. America was the last holdout, owing to the efforts of the Justice Congress, but even they could not prevail without help. To that end, the group's sorcerer, Dr. Halcyon, had sent out a mystic call for champions. Apparently this was what had summoned the Professor.

Initially the Professor was angry at being torn away from his own pursuits to serve the cause of a few mortal heroes in some alternate might-have-been timeline. But then he considered further. Was he not bound to oppose evil no matter where he found it? Could an angel ignore the call to war against the minions of the lower planes? Perhaps in fact this world was where he would find his true destiny and earn his place in Heaven again. The Professor agreed that he was indeed the champion they sought—and would lead them to victory.

In the years that followed, the Professor, the Justice Congress, and a few other, more carefully summoned heroes fought long and hard against the daemonic legions of the Axis of Chaos. The Professor's closest companion among his allies was Johnny Doll. Johnny was a daring, earnest, and pious young man who used the power of the Wishing Man to battle evil. The Wishing Man was an extraordinary device—a tiny figurine that would transform into a towering animated suit of armor upon command, able to perform almost any amazing feat with the potent magic it contained within. The Wishing Man could only be controlled by the seventh son of a seventh son of one whose bloodline dated back to fabled Camelot. Johnny Doll was one such. Johnny accompanied the Professor on many missions, and may have been the closest thing he ever had to a friend. Sadly, Johnny was cut down by an abomination called the Meat Man—a grotesquerie Professor Purgatory took immense satisfaction in slowly burning to death from the inside out. From then on the Professor carried the Wishing Man with

him—as a memento and as an item worthy of future study.

The Justice Congress finally succeeded in closing the hell-holes that supplied the Axis of Chaos with its inexhaustible armies of demon troops, and upon the Axis' overthrow the Professor personally oversaw the crucifixion of the Axis' leaders. However, just as he was savoring this victory over the underworld, one of the Axis generals—the Charnel Commander—spat out a curse with his dying breath. This curse severed the bond that kept Professor Purgatory and many of the other heroes in the Justice Congress' world. The Professor found himself standing outside his old laboratory. Mere moments had passed in what had seemed like years. Only the figurine tucked into the folds of his cloak remained to attest to the reality of what he had experienced.

Did any of it really happen, or is the Professor making it all up to explain where he got the Wishing Man? Only he knows for sure. However, his actions do seem to indicate that whether or not he invented the story, he believes it. Read on.

After a few months passed, the Professor hit upon an idea. His attempts to unlock the secrets of the Wishing Man had proved fruitless, but what if one already existed who could command its magic? Several of the Justice Congress members had counterparts in his timeline, in the “real world”—perhaps Johnny Doll did also? Sure enough, he soon uncovered his reality's version of his old companion. Seeking this Johnny Doll out, Professor Purgatory explained who he was and why he was getting in touch. Johnny was at first incredulous, but soon convinced when the Professor demonstrated his own powers—and then patiently guided him through activating the Wishing Man's magic. Professor Purgatory told Johnny the marvelous figurine was his to keep, so long as he used it as the other Johnny Doll had—in the pursuit of righteousness. Johnny eagerly swore to do so and the Professor promptly took his leave, forgetting about the matter almost immediately.

A decade later, as the Professor was recovering from a clash with a band of

typically “misguided” heroes know as the Xtra-Ordinarys, a thought occurred to him as he contemplated his next grand plan: He had not heard of the Wishing Man or any of the wonderful deeds that the Johnny Doll of this reality must have used it to perform. Curious, he began to investigate the matter. The details he learned as he began his search did not please him, but he held out hope that the information he was uncovering was somehow incorrect. He eventually tracked Jack to a house of ill-repute in the French Quarter of New Orleans. Containing himself enough to walk through the sin-soaked hallways without slaying all inside, he found Jack sprawled out on an oversized bed, attended by two of the establishments female “staff members”; Jack was bloated and red-faced, stubble covering his face and broken veins working their way across his nose. Empty bottles of expensive drink littered the floor, along with the paraphernalia associated with more noxious drugs. Gold coins and precious gems were scattered about. The figurine of the Wishing Man had been carelessly dropped at the foot of the bed.

Seeing what had become of the man he had charged with the duty to become a hero—a man whom he had gifted with such a potent magical artifact, with what had been the most precious possession of a friend and fallen ally, Professor Purgatory thoughts turned dark with disgust—and then rage. This...this decadence was what the Wishing Man had been used for? To grant the every whim of a drunkard and a glutton? To be used to satisfy the base carnal desires of a wastrel? This was beyond an outrage!

“Johnny Doll! We gave you the greatest of gifts and bade you use it well! You have disgraced yourself, and worse you have disgraced us! You will know our wrath! You will suffer as few men have!”

With that, Professor Purgatory clamped one hand over Jack’s face in an iron grip and snatched up the figurine with the other. When the women drew his attention by shouting out in protest and surprise, he spoke a spell that rendered them unsuitable for their chosen profession. He casually crippled the house doorman

who ran to the room in response to the women’s screams. Smashing through the ceiling of the house he flew off with Jack in tow, disappearing into the night.

The Professor was true to his word. Johnny suffered through months of physical and mental torture. By the time the Professor was through with him, Johnny was a broken thing that knew only fear and guilt. He kept repeating over and over that he was sorry, sorry, so sorry, for being weak and misusing the magic of the Wishing Man and drinking and gambling and oh, please, if the Professor would just stop hurting him he would do better, he would do anything...

“It is good that you have finally seen that your dissolute life has brought you nothing but agony and regret. Your trials are not over. There will be pain for you now and for many years to come, but we shall give you the means to earn your redemption. You were meant to use the Wishing Man as a mighty force for good in this world—and so you shall.” The Professor then dragged him to a vast, darkened room, and placed Johnny in the center of a chalk circle. He then held out the Wishing Man figurine in his right hand while speaking some arcane formula and making mysterious passes with his left hand. At the end of the ritual the Wishing Man grew to full-size, just as if Johnny had commanded it—but now Johnny was inside the mystic armor, his body compressed and stretched to fill out its confines! The Wishing Man had become his prison, the cell which he would serve out his “sentence”! Johnny was immediately in agony—his once paunchy physique had been rendered scrawny through months of enforced deprivation, but the proportions of the armor where all wrong for any man—too tall by half, too thin in the arms and legs, too bulky in the torso, hands and feet. Worse, being imprisoned in the armor essentially cut off his senses of taste, touch, and smell. He could barely even hear. What little was left of Johnny’s spirit collapsed and he sank to his knees in despair.

Professor Purgatory then spoke to him softly, almost kindly. He explained that he was being merciful—he had given Johnny a second chance. But Johnny would have to

prove that he sincerely wished to redeem himself, that his penitence was genuine. He would do so by serving the Professor, acting as a living weapon in whatever righteous crusades the Professor might launch in the future. Only by doing so would he prove worthy to be freed of his burden. Nodding pitifully, Johnny realized his torments had just begun.

Appearance and Demeanor

When not serving at the behest of Professor Purgatory (or occasionally Sister Splendor) the Penitent simply stumbles about the world, trying to overwhelm his tortured mind and pain-wracked body with whatever sensations are at hand. He generally seeks out the worst, seediest sections of the most sprawling cities, where he tries his best to pass as just another desperate, homeless drifter. He takes comfort in simple pleasures such as sitting in the corner of a run-down dive (though he cannot actually even so much as quaff a beer) or staring through the barred windows of adult bookstores. These activities feed his self-loathing, however, and coupled with his inability to truly interact with normal human beings, his frustration inevitably drives him into berserk fits of destruction. Over the years he has leveled dozens of city blocks and caused tens of millions in property damage. He has clashed with many superheroes, but so far no one has been able to capture or contain him once he gets going.

The Penitent is a shambling, stoop-shouldered 7' 6" tall figure clad in what appears to be a badly tarnished, antique suit of armor. When wandering between missions he dons a wide-brimmed floppy hat and bulky, filth-spattered overcoat to conceal his appearance. The armor's facemask limits his speech and hearing—the Penitent is deaf to all but the loudest noises, and is largely unable to form intelligible words, his speaking ability reduced to one-syllable utterances, mixed with groans and grunts of pain.

The Penitent obeys Professor Purgatory primarily out of fear and shame, but his master does offer the occasional incentive; if he performs particularly well on a mission the Professor sometimes performs

a ritual which temporarily removes the face plate of the armor, allowing the Penitent to hear, speak, eat, and breathe real air. When feeling particularly generous, Professor Purgatory will let him lie at the feet of Sister Splendor, bathing in her celestial glow. It is only then that he is relieved of the chronic pain the armor inflicts on him—even if only for a brief period of time.

The Wishing Man armor is virtually indestructible, providing the Penitent with near invulnerability to conventional methods of harm. Furthermore, the armor sustains him without the need for air, food, or water—a necessity as Johnny cannot eat or drink while the armor's facemask is in place. The Wishing Man's magic was once nearly boundless, limited only by the imagination of the one that wielded it—but the armor was never meant to house a mortal being; the integrity of the construct's various enchantments have been weakened and disrupted. Still, the residual magic in the shell makes the Penitent a truly fearsome opponent. The spells in the armor allow him to gain whatever powers are necessary to defeat nearly any single foe. In addition, the armor's magic sometimes wells up and unleashes various destructive forces—fierce winds, lightning storms, shockwaves, and the like. This is always unpredictable and often harmful to the Penitent as well. Such displays usually carry side-effects that are unpleasant either for him or those around him.

Adventures With the Penitent:

1) The Penitent Penitent

The Penitent makes a rare daylight appearance. Howling and moaning, he rampages across a public park downtown, smashing anything in his path. Then he encounters a young man with Down's Syndrome, whose caregiver has taken him to the park for the day. Seeing that the Penitent is sad, he smiles and gives the rampaging giant his balloon. This is too much for the Penitent to bear. Racked with guilt and remorse, he falls to the ground sobbing.

The Player Characters learn that a disturbance is taking place in the park—it sounds as though an extremely dangerous supervillain is on a rampage. Possibly the Penitent himself. Would they be up to facing him?

As they nervously make their way through the now-deserted park, they can hear the eerie sound of the Penitent sobbing. They find him slumped face-down on the ground, weeping uncontrollably as he clutches the string of the balloon. Is it safe to approach? As a matter of fact it is. The PCs won't know it until they actually put their hands on him, but he is much too stricken with pain and remorse to offer an resistance at all.

As they are about to apprehend him, they see a terrified little girl peeking out at them from behind a nearby tree. Her name is Constanza Diaz, and she saw what happened with the retarded boy and the balloon. She was too scared to run and she's been hiding here the whole time.

Once the PCs get Constanza out of here and apprehend the Penitent, they will be faced with the question of what to do with him. If at any point they try to take the balloon away from him he will go berserk. Otherwise he just keeps sobbing.

Professor Purgatory quickly learns what has happened and he sends the rest of the team to break the Penitent out of custody. Afterwards, he will try to find and capture the luckless boy who gave the Penitent the balloon. The Professor is convinced that he must have some kind of hidden superpower and he will want to conduct horrible experiments on him. Can the PCs find him first? Can they protect him? If they fail, can they find the Professor's lair and rescue him from the clutches of the Ordo Ultima?

More Penitent Than You

A friend of a PC approaches them in their secret identity. She is very upset about her son, Josiah. Of course, this comes as no surprise—he's slowly dying of Hotchkins' Lymphoma, but his life has lately taken an even more sinister turn.

Josiah is an intensely religious, amazingly charismatic fourteen year old boy.

He's been communicating with other terminally ill kids on line and in person, and he has become the leader of a small and disturbing cult.

Josiah is obsessed with the supervillain known as the Penitent. He recognizes the creature's pain and sickness—Josiah knows exactly what it feels like to be in constant torment and he recognizes it. He has convinced his circle of followers that the Penitent has come to judge and redeem them.

They dress like the Penitent and wear masks like his, mutilating themselves to share his agony (though frankly most of them already have enough agony of their own).

Like many terminally ill children, Josiah has developed a mild precognitive faculty and he is convinced that he knows where the Penitent will be at a particular moment next week (stumbling through a city park downtown). His followers will gather there and ask the Penitent to judge them and redeem them. When the appointed day arrives, they will slip out of their houses dressed in masks and tattered trenchcoats and floppy hats. They have crudely cobbled together suits of golden armor out of parts of Halloween costumes and old tin cans. They will gather together at a pre-arranged spot and then go find their redeemer.

The Penitent will not be pleased to see them. He hates his own image and he will try to smash anything that looks like himself, including a bunch of sickly adolescents.

By the time the PCs figure out what Josiah and his flock are planning, it's too late to persuade him to stop them—he's already lapsed into his final coma and he'll be dead within hours from his disease. Nor is it possible to tell from the records on his computer who all of his followers are ahead of time. The PCs are going to have to get to the park and fend of the Penitent before he slaughters all the kids. If the PCs don't stop this, the kids will line up to be killed, each one walking forward and kneeling in front of the Penitent no matter how many others he has killed, each thinking that they are the one who will be found pure and redeemed.

REGIMENT

(the former one-man army)



Quote: <translated from the Chinese> *I have no wish to do this—I cannot help myself. I am sorry for your death.*

PL: 14

Real Identity: Wu Feng-Chou

Dual Identity: Secret (although he maintains no separate “non-super” life, his name and early history are closely guarded Chinese state secrets)

Group Affiliation: The Ordo Ultima (formerly field-leader of the Battalion of National Perfection)

Nationality: Chinese

Height: 7’3”

Weight: 500 pounds

Hair Color: Black

Eye Color: Brown

Age: 27

Str: 14 (+2)/ 38(+14) **Dex:** 12 (+1)

Con: 14 (+2)/38(+14) **Int:** 14 (+2)

Wis: 16 (+3) **Cha:** 20 (+5)

Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 12

Defense: 12 **Toughness Save:** 14

Fortitude Save: 14 **Reflexes Save:** 1

Willpower Save: 3

Skills: Concentration 5 (+8), Craft (Electronics) 5 (+7), Intimidate 10 (+15), Notice 5 (+8), Search 8 (+10), Stealth 5 (+6), Survival 5 (+8)

Feats: Fearsome Presence 5, Improved Grapple, Power Attack, Sneak Attack, Tracking

Powers: Additional Limbs 8, Anatomic Separation 10 (Extra: Variable Split), Enhanced Strength 24, Enhanced Constitution 24, Immunity 8 (Immune to Bullets, Disease, Suffocation), Insubstantial 1 (Can flow through confined spaces, can’t be held in manacles), Regeneration 28 (+12 to Constitution Checks to recover from damage, makes rolls to recover from being Injured, Staggered or Disabled once per round).

Drawbacks: Disabled (hard of hearing, fails all auditory Notice checks automatically) -1pt

Background and History

A product of the Communist Chinese government’s push to create battalions of paranormally powered soldiers, Regiment (which is an approximate English translation of his Chinese code-name) is a clone, flash grown from the genes of an elite Red Chinese Army infantryman that had been spliced with superhuman traits from numerous mutant embryos. Artificially aged to adult in months, he was thoroughly indoctrinated in Marxist ideology and conditioned for absolute loyalty. The artificial “hot house” environment he was raised in was designed to optimize his genetic potential. It subjected his post-human physiology to extreme stress, forcing his power levels to rise commensurately. The final result was everything the military and scientific officials overseeing the project hoped for. He was the culmination of their theories, and would serve as the backbone of the planned Battalion of National Perfection. The battalion had been in the planning stages since the early 70s, and was finally bearing fruit by 1980. This battalion would act as a counter-balance to the disproportionately large number of super-

beings native to the U.S. and Japan, allowing China to flex its political muscle in the Eastern hemisphere without the threat of paranormal intervention from outside.

Regiment had two crèche-mates. The first was a male derived from the same genetic material as his own, though given a different set of modifications. Regiment's twin did not respond as well to the hot-housing process and never achieved the power levels of his "older brother", but was deemed a success nonetheless. He was code-named Earth Dragon for his ability to tap into the planet's geothermal pulse. Unknown to his government handlers, the use of his powers somehow accelerated his intellect, making him immune to brainwashing; he was careful to conceal this, as he realized early on what his fate would be if the Communist Party discovered their mental conditioning was not taking root in him. He was careful to "play dumb" when necessary.

The second, a female, was cloned from the deceased daughter of a senior Communist Party official. Before her death from a fatal fall, the young woman had been a Olympic gymnast and an excellent scholar. Coupled with her family's service, that was enough for the government to use her DNA for their female creation. Upon her growth to adulthood, she was dubbed Wellspring, as she could breathe life into inanimate objects. She could animate anything from a folded paper sculpture to a ten-ton stone statue.

What no one else knew was that the three "siblings" shared a bond—not quite at the level of telepathy, but an innate knowledge of each others well-being and emotional state. They could communicate with each other through glances or body language. This remained their secret. Even Regiment did not disclose it to their communist masters. Regiment was closer than a brother to Earth Dragon, but he was even more to Wellspring. He and she loved each other passionately, though they never experienced physical intimacy.

All three were assigned to the Perfect Battalion, what was to be the vanguard of the Chinese National super-military. Unfortunately, the plan suffered a

major setback when Professor Purgatory set foot in Beijing and the Battalion was sent to intercept him before it had been fully trained. The result was sheer carnage, a clash that left a score of super-soldiers and hundreds of civilians dead.

Regiment was the most powerful of the super-soldiers sent against Professor Purgatory in 1983; he was thought to have perished along with most of his fellow Sino-Supermen in the battle. He was, in fact, the sole survivor besides Purgatory, though he was left comatose by his injuries. The Professor had observed Regiment's power to create squad of duplicates and found it quite interesting. After the conflict was over he decided to take the young man's inert body back to the Paradise Delayed for use in his medical experiments—and Regiment has spent most of his time on a slab in the laboratory, undergoing various procedures since that time. Purgatory has created two successive genetic knock-offs of Regiment, both of whom he named Legion. Legion I had abilities similar but inferior to that Regiment originally possessed, while Legion II displayed a vast array of superhuman powers, his mutable chromosomes adapting to any threat or foe. Unfortunately, both these experiments ended in failure. Legion I spontaneously disintegrated after three months; Legion II rebelled, and after a fierce hours-long struggle against the Professor and X'Hort, it suddenly melted into a foul-smelling goop. Whether the Professor goes forward with his efforts remains to be seen.

Regiment regained consciousness during the events detailed in the Adventure "the Promise of Purgatory" (available now from Plain Brown Wrapper Games!) and attempted escape. He was thwarted and returned to captivity, but the Prof. was determined to put the fantastic being to good use—and what better use than his own cause?

However, the conditioning Regiment received as a "child" proved hard to overcome. Regiment remained committed to Communist ideals. He kept trying to break free. To get his cooperation, the Professor has resorted to more coercive methods. He has used genetically tailored

mind influencing drugs, virtual reality helmets, and surgically embedded pain inducers. Nothing seems to work for long, but Regiment is too great an asset for the Prof. to ignore. He will keep on trying to break the former super-soldier's will.

Appearance and Demeanor

Regiment is now a lumbering pile of bone, muscle, and puttylike flesh, with a surplus of eyes, mouths, and limbs. He is usually dressed in rags and surgical bandages. He may sometimes be wearing a specially tailored body-stocking, composed of "smart-polymers" that respond to his ever-warping physique. Professor Purgatory broke one too many DNA strands in his experiments upon the poor man. Regiment can no longer create duplicates of himself, but he is still superhumanly strong and resistant to injury. His unstable cellular structure heals with unnatural speed. He can actually break off segments of his body and command them to operate independently, and he can even reduce his molecular density to the point where his body flows like liquid—a goopy, oozing flesh-like liquid.

He is a formidable foe, as his accelerated metabolism makes him difficult to hurt and his ability to split parts of himself off allows him to fight multiple opponents at once. If he is badly hurt he will change over to his "ooze" state and attempt escape. His abilities make him not only an incredibly effective in melee combat but excellent at stealth missions as well. He can ooze through drain pipes and under doors; detach body parts to perform multiple tasks, and so on.

He is still an intelligent being, but his mind is clouded—he does not comprehend how much time has passed or the exact circumstances he is in. His hearing was damaged from the explosion two decades ago, rendering him partially deaf. His English is limited, which (along with his horrific appearance) has prevented him from communicating his desire for help in escaping, something he has tried to do several times while on missions. He vaguely recalls the fight with Purgatory but doesn't understand how he came to be a prisoner. He has no choice to do as Prof. Purgatory

commands, but in the back of his mind he still hopes to somehow make it back to China. He has no knowledge that China has largely abandoned communism as an economic/social system, though it remains a one-party dictatorship. He does sense that Earth Dragon and Wellspring are still alive, and that somehow the two have been separated.

In fact, Earth Dragon defected to the West two years after the massacre of dissidents at Tiananmen Square. He is now a naturalized U.S. citizen and works for the National Security Agency as a sanctioned superhuman. His cooperation with the Pentagon has been invaluable in helping the United States play catch-up with the Chinese when it comes to meta-human breeding programs.

Wellspring was adopted by the family whose daughter she was cloned from, and has since obtained a position of party leadership. Though she married a party official and has four children (the normal Chinese birth quota was waived for her), all showing meta-human traits, she never again felt the passion that a simple look convened between Regiment and her. Both Earth Dragon and Wellspring can still "feel" the turmoil of their long-lost brother, but neither is in a position to track Regiment down.

Adventures With Regiment:

To the Far End of Time

Word reaches the PCs of a supervillain battle on the freeway downtown. When they race to the scene, they find Regiment and Sister Splendor both pursuing a battered up old VW van, painted in fading psychedelic swirls. They are both being very careful not to hit or otherwise damage the van as they trade blows, but while Regiment is trying not to hurt any civilians, Sister Splendor is showing no such compunctions. It's clear from what Sister Splendor is yelling at Regiment that they both want some kind of machine that's in the van. "No, no!" she screams "It's for the Master, not for you to use yourself."

Cars and trucks are careening out of control all around them. What's in the van? It's famed maverick scientist Dr. Gerald Grogan ("Dr. Groovy" to his few remaining

fans). His weird ideas about the mathematical cosmic oneness of all reality and the mind-enhancing powers of LSD got him drummed out of the scientific establishment by 1971, but also got him a series of moderately successful paperback book and a series of pretty girlfriends who were all much too young for him. The world has forgotten Dr. Groovy of late and as he enters his seventies, he has come to feel a lot of regrets. So he's built a time machine. He intends to use it to either restore his lost youth or go back in time and keep himself from screwing his life up—he isn't really sure which.

Professor Purgatory reads the alternative and occult press and takes it all much too seriously. He has read Dr. Groovy's dubious ramblings and he wants to get his hands on that time machine. He's use it to travel back 4,000 years, to the moment when God created the world and be reunited with the infinite!

Regiment overheard the Professor ranting about this and decides to have the machine for himself. He can go back in time to before his team fought Professor Purgatory and warn them, preventing their defeat and stopping this hellish phase of his life from ever happening!

If Dr. Groovy manages to get far enough ahead of his pursuers to take a moment to reflect, it will occur to him to pull his van over to the median and use his time machine (which is in the back) to escape. Whether or not he has had a chance to get away, the machine is still there if the PCs or either of the supervillains catch the van. It looks a lot like a complicated Tibetan mandala made out of twisted wire with big black earphones (for the traveler to "hear the cosmic harmonies") attached, along with some voltaic gauges, a box with four black dials marked out in years and a car battery.

If Regiment gets the back of the van open, he immediately claps the earphones on his head, sets the dials for 1980 and turns the machine on. And it works. But not very well.

Regiment, the PCs, the van, and anything else nearby get sucked into a time warp and plummet down the black abyss of years. They arrive not in 1980, but thirty-

five million years in the future, a dismal epoch best avoided. They appear in a cold and murky swamp where it always seems to be twilight. Monstrous froglike creatures that shoot beams out of their eyes and drain the Constitution from everything they touch will periodically assault the PCs and Regiment for as long as they remain here. It will probably be a good idea for the Player Characters to form an alliance with the giant, gooshy supervillain—the creatures are all PL 10 and they seem to get more numerous and better organized with every assault.

After 24 hours the PCs and Regiment will snap back to about six hours away from the moment they left, just as the creatures are rolling some kind of big, evil-looking weapon into position.

The PCs may have already figured out how to use the time-machine to go back, although it won't send them back to any time period before they left (which would surely cause too many plot headaches for the GM).

When they return to their own time, nothing has changed, except that Dr. Gerald Grogan is now an internet billionaire and a revered scientist (he must have made it back to the late 60s with some advice for his previous self after all).

Regiment, on the other hand, is in big trouble with his boss. The PCs may be in trouble too, since they have suddenly appeared in the middle of a freeway.

Dr. Groovy

PL: 6

Str: 10 (+0) Dex: 16 (+3) Con: 10 (+0) Int: 20 (+5) Wis: 16 (+3) Cha: 16 (+3) Initiative: 3 Attack Bonus: 0 Defense: 6 Toughness Save: 0 Fortitude Save: 3 Reflexes Save: 6 Willpower Save: 6
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Skills: Bluff 6 (+9), Diplomacy 3 (+6)
Concentration 6 (+9), Computers 7 (+12),
Craft (chemical) 6 (+11), 2nd Craft Skill
(electronic) 7 (+11), Knowledge (physical
sciences) 7 (+11), Knowledge (technology)
9 (+14), Medicine 5 (+10), Notice 4 (+7),
Profession (scientist) 7 (+12)

Feats: Beginner's Luck, Improvised Tools,
Inventor, Skill Mastery, (both of his Craft
Skills, and both of his Knowledge Skills),
Ultimate Effort, Well-Informed

Vile Frog Monster from 35 Million AD
PL: 10

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 30 (+10)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 4 **Attack Bonus:** 9
Defense: 9 (4 if he is caught Flatfooted)
Toughness Save: 10 (7 Impervious, 3 without her Force Field) **Fortitude Save:** 7
Reflexes Save: 7 **Willpower Save:** 8

Skills: Intimidate 9 (+10), Notice 7 (+8), Search 4 (+5), Stealth 5 (+9)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Dodge Focus 5, Fearsome Presence 5, Power Attack, Sneak Attack 2, Startle

Powers: Blast 10 (Power Feat: Alternate Power [Deflection (All Ranged Attacks)]), Drain (Constitution) 10, Immunity 1 (can breathe water)

Complications: Speaks not human languages. Acts like a frog monster from 35 million AD—a vile one.

Eye in the Pyramid

Professor Purgatory decides that America's power is founded upon the Masonic symbolism of its capitol. All those monuments with their sinister alignments and cryptic symbols form a vast astral configuration of power—and it's getting in the way of his apotheosis. He makes a rare public announcement. He is giving America one day to dismantle the Masonic matrix of monuments in Washington DC, or else he will have no choice but to take action himself.

This causes nationwide alarm. (although it's nothing compared to what will soon follow) A supervillain plans to attack America's most treasured relics! Does this fiend intend to level the Washington Monument? Blow up the Lincoln Memorial? Assault the White House itself? Patriotic superheroes are mobilized to protect the nation's capital, along with whatever military or law-enforcement agencies fight super-crime in your game world. No one is sure precisely where when or how Professor Purgatory intends to strike.

In fact he's sending Regiment. This looks like a really dangerous assignment, and Regiment is both expendable and supremely durable. The odds are good that he can achieve the mission objective before

getting clipped down. It does not occur to the Professor that Regiment is a Chinese super-soldier and that his attack on the capitol of the United States is sure to cause a serious international incident.

The PCs are assigned to defend the Jefferson Memorial, if they check in with the Feds. If not, they overhear a radio message that Regiment has been sighted and he's moving in that direction, brushing all opposition aside. None of the other super-teams want to leave their positions unguarded in case more villains are coming, so it's up to the PCs to stop him.

And here's a surprise twist. His mission objective isn't the Jefferson Memorial at all. Hidden away in the trees behind Jefferson's gigantic memorial is a smaller site, commemorating one of the lesser-known founding fathers, George Mason. Here a grinning statue of fat old Mr. Mason sits in a broad-brimmed hat on one end of a concrete bench, seemingly inviting visitors to come sit next to him. Professor Purgatory has decided that it is the cornerstone of DC's esoteric power grid and he wants Regiment to smash it.

And just to make things a little more complicated, as soon as Regiment is sighted the Chinese government scrambles a super-team of its own to come retrieve him. They may or may not arrive while Regiment is grappling with the PCs, and if they get caught on film, fighting American superheroes inside Washington DC, it could have dire international consequences

PROFESSOR PURGATORY



Quote: *"It is clear you require instruction in the ways of righteousness"*

PL: 18

Real Identity: Unknown (does not know himself)

Dual Identity: Does not bother to use an alias or to maintain a secondary identify

Group Affiliation: The Ordo Ultima

Nationality: Unknown (may be Yugoslavian)

Height: 6'3" (6'6" in armor)

Weight: 200 pounds

Hair Color: Red

Eye Color: Gold

Age: Unknown (but is at least 92)

Str: 38 (+14) /18 (+4) **Dex:** 16 (+3)
Con: 20 (+5) **Int:** 25 (+7) **Wis:** 38 (+14)
Cha: 24 (+7)
Initiative: 8 **Attack Bonus:** 15

Defense: 13 **Toughness Save:** 20/5
(without his battlesuit) **Fortitude Save:** 13
Reflexes Save: 10 **Willpower Save:** 14

Skills: Craft (mechanical) 15 (+22), Disable Device 15 (+22), Diplomacy 14 (+21), Gather Information 10 (+17), Intimidate 10 (+17), Knowledge (arcane lore) 15 (+22), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 15 (+22), Notice 8 (+22), Search 5 (+12), Stealth 5 (+8), Sense Motive 5 (+19)

Feats: Artificer, Assessment, Equipment 23 (115 pts worth), Improved Initiative, Improvised Tools, Inventor, Inspire, Leadership, Master Plan, Ritualist, Takedown Attack

Powers: Dark Vision; Device 24 (Battlesuit, 120 Points, Battlesuit is equipped with the following powers: Blast 17, Enhanced Strength 20, Flight 5 (250mph), Force Field 10, Protection 5, Super-Movement [Interdimensional Travel] 4, Teleport 6); Immunity 6 (Aging, Disease, Exhaustion, Hunger and Thirst, Poison, Sleep), Magic 10 (Flaws: None, but it takes 2 full rounds for him to shift between spells, see "Drawbacks"; prepared spells are: Darkness Control, Create Object, Environmental Control [Light; Distraction, Hamper Movement,], and Telekinesis), Regeneration 5 (+3 to recover checks, roll to recover every 5 minutes)

Equipment: Normally has at least 75 points in a Headquarters, and the rest of his points are usually tied up in some big, dangerous device or other, which he hopes will destroy the world or make him a god or both.

Complications: Fanatical madman convinced of his own divinity, never breaks his word once he has given it.

Drawbacks: Action (it requires two full rounds for Professor Purgatory to change between spells) -2pts; Power Loss (the Professor must be able to speak arcane formulae and freely make esoteric gestures to invoke/maintain spells, to create "on the spot" occult devices, or cast rituals); Vulnerable (as a creature of magic, Professor Purgatory is moderately vulnerable to piercing/stabbing weapons made of cold-wrought iron or weapons specially consecrated against supernatural evil by a holy man/woman (blessing requires 20+ ranks in Arcane Lore, and the Artificer and

Ritual feats) -3pts; Weak Point (battlesuit is susceptible to critical hits from attacks that strike the power jewel in the center of the breast plate) -1pt.

Note to the Reader: Here it is at last—the absolutely definitive biography of Professor Purgatory. You may have seen parts of it before in other Plain Brown Wrapper Games publications, but this is the complete, full-length version. Take your time with it.

Background and History

The first memories the man who would become Professor Purgatory has of the world date back to an isolated temple in the hills of Montenegro (later a part of Yugoslavia) in 1915. He first became aware of his own existence standing naked on a dais in the middle of an antechamber. It was clear from the occult paraphernalia and the mystic sigils inscribed on the floor that some arcane ritual had been attempted, perhaps a summoning of some sort. It was also obvious that something had gone awry; the bloody, mutilated bodies of the monks strewn about the chamber and the hallways testified to that. He felt no fear or even curiosity about the carnage, only a grim sense of satisfaction. The monk had committed some act of evil, he was certain, and had paid the just price for their transgressions. Taking a tattered set of ropes and a simple pair of sandals from one of the monks, he left the temple to seek the answers of his existence in the outside world. Thus began years of wandering the world, sometimes working, sometimes begging, often cold, hurt, or hungry, always alone, and relentlessly searching.

As he wandered the earth and the years passed he learned that he was not as other men. He was superior in nearly every way. His mind was quicker and surer, possessed of a harsh wisdom. He did not age and he did not tire. He experienced hunger and thirst, but did not weaken or suffer from lack of food or drink. He was never touched by plague or infection. Any insult to his body healed with unnatural speed, wounds closing in seconds. His senses were attuned to the mystic, allowing him to see more than other men. Most fantastic of all,

he can bend reality itself to his will through his spoken words. The laws of nature themselves could not hold against his precisely crafted, meticulous mathematical and philosophical arguments. He could speak Power to Truth.

In his travels he also discovered that sin abounded in the world... sin was all around him, permeating every corner of the world. The selfish who refused to grant him the alms of clothing and coins he humbly requested (until he simply took them), the wrathful who responded to his modest requests with vulgarities and threats (until he chastised them), the lustful that tempted the flesh by flaunting their bodies (so he taught them shame)—all of these had to be taught the error of their lifestyles through lessons of humiliation and pain. And so he did teach them, at every opportunity and with great thoroughness. Those he punished would never forget their lessons.

He found that he relished delivering punishment—which he took as further proof of his own righteousness. After all, an evil man would not be so driven to punish evil, would he? And as his gifts were God-given, was he not then acting with the will of God? He was no sadist—he took no pleasure in doling out excruciating pain or humiliating debasements, though doing so was necessary to expiate sin. No, he simply felt pride and satisfaction in the enactment of justice. Brutal methods had to be employed if others were to be warned away from the path of evil. He was a surgeon cutting away the cancers of the world, a bit at a time.

It was during one such lesson that his true nature was revealed to him. He was in a back alley of Indonesia in 1936, teaching the virtue of modesty to a young woman who had had the temerity to suggest he join her for an obscene act. As he made certain she would never enjoy normal relations again (thus ridding her of her perverse nature) he experienced a moment of clarity. He knew why he had abilities far beyond other men, and why he could not abide the immorality rampant in the world: He was a divine being—an angel. It was he who had been summoned by the monks in the temple—and it was he who had slain them for their transgression,

attempting to bind a creature of the higher planes to their will. Crying tears of joy, he threw his arms wide and willed himself back to Heaven.

And then...nothing happened. He was still standing in a muddy alleyway in a squalid little country, the air filled with the sobs of the wretched slattern he had punished. But why-why was he being denied his place in Paradise? Then he was struck by another thought: it was obvious the monks had been allowed to bring him to Earth for a reason. He was here to provide instruction for the fallen, to redeem those who still had the potential for salvation...and put an end to those who did not. That had to be the answer. He had allowed himself to be summoned to the material plane by the vile monks, almost becoming their cat's-paw, and become unworthy in the eyes of God. He had to prove himself to his Lord.

But he would no longer walk among mankind anonymously, concealing his glory in undistinguished human flesh and humble garments. He had to make the world understand that an Agent of Righteousness was among them, ready to punish those who were wicked and strong and protect those who were just yet weak. Searching for inspiration, he found it in the tattered pages of an American newspaper detailing the exploits of the costumed adventurers and masked "mystery men" who had recently debuted on the world stage. Some, like him, also seemed to possess powers beyond those of mortals. These were not angels of course, but likely God-Touched nonetheless. He felt a kinship with these men. He would style himself after them.

He set to work, creating a gleaming suit of mystic armor (acquiring the occult and technological materials he required by whatever means needed, as was his right) which greatly increased his strength and imperviousness to harm. The mystic engineering of the armor allowed him to send forth bolts of "divine retribution", searing energies to burn souls of sinners. Clad in this armor and a resplendent silver cloak, he adopted the identity of Professor Purgatory, Champion of Righteousness, and Bane of Corrupted Souls. He decided to travel from Europe to the United States, as

that was where the mystery-men phenomenon was most widespread. Besides, the US seemed to be growing into the capital of world activity, a more vibrant land than the tradition bound Europe.

Professor Purgatory pursued his mission with new zeal, no longer engaging in random, furtive episodes of "redemption", but actively and aggressively pursuing corrupt businessmen and politicians, entertainers paraded immorality vice dealers, and false religious leaders. He rarely fought the various arch-fiends and master criminals that were emerging in this era, preferring instead to focus on those he considered the true source of society's ills. Early on his crusade garnered a fair share of supporters, particularly among those in the lower economic classes, who often approved of the "Professor's" actions against gangsters, war profiteers and scandalous celebrities. On a few occasions, Professor Purgatory even teamed-up with other early heroic adventurers to combat the scourge of organized crime. He made an alliance of convenience with Skull-Face (alias the Copper-Eyed Crime Killer) to bring down the so-called Sultan of Sin, a notorious vice-lord and criminal mastermind who headed a criminal syndicate that operated in New York City and across the Eastern Seaboard. He was hailed for his efforts in the press, though "officially speaking" he was still considered an outlaw by the authorities, as were most of the mystery men types of the era. It was also during this period that he first encountered Mr. Chiang, an Asian crime lord of obscure origins. Purgatory crossed paths with Chiang when the Professor began a campaign against the opium trade in San Francisco. While burning out one of the vice dens (and badly scarring several of the staff and clients), the dapper little man appeared before him, seemingly out of nowhere. Mr. Chiang stated that he ceded Professor Purgatory the advantage when it came to direct warfare but "Wars are often won by the patient and the subtle. I will sip from the teacup of satisfaction at a later date, my formidable friend."

The Professor directed an annihilating blast at the impudent jackanapes, but when he went over to

inspect the corpse, he found only empty smoldering clothes. He never saw the Mr. Chiang again, but the man's words would later be borne out, nearly fifty years later.

As time passed, Professor Purgatory's cruel and vindictive nature asserted itself. His victims were as likely as not to be guilty of no more than petty offenses or minor moral transgressions, while his punishments became increasingly creative and sadistic. While he had previously restrained himself enough to do no more to such scofflaws than deliver them for arrest or subject them to public humiliation, he became increasingly violent and punitive. The Professor finally landed on the FBI's "Most Wanted" list after his assault on film stars Clifford James and Virginia Fontaine, who were enjoying a torrid, rather public affair, despite the fact that both were still married to others. His attack on their Beverly Hills mansion left James dead, his back broken across the Professor's knee and Ms. Fontaine missing; after three days she resurfaced, a scarlet letter 'A' burned across her forehead and unable to speak without stuttering badly. He had gone after Hollywood-types before, but had never done much more than deliver minor beatings (to the men only, at that) and then expose their indiscretions to the public. This act of naked brutality went far over that line. Soon enough, Professor Purgatory was widely known as a psychopath and a super-villain, losing whatever public support he once enjoyed. The super-heroes he once saw as his distant kinsmen turned against him, their efforts forcing him to stay on the move from one country and continent to the next. He took this as further evidence of the sinful, fallen nature of the world, that even his brethren could be twisted to oppose him. It saddened him that that so many of those he believed to be righteous could be so easily manipulated into opposing him, but he accepted it as a consequence of the corrupt modern age that tainted even its finest champions. Thus he had no compunction about decapitating Anton Noble, the Man of 1,000 Talents and impaling the Phantom Sleuth on an iron fence when the two crime-busters teamed up and tried to take him in.

He now knew the path he would walk would be a lonely one, though he still hoped to eventually find others worthy to assist him.

The Professor was active world-wide from the 1940s through the early 1980s; operating in the U.S., Mexico, South America, Europe, Asia, and even Scandinavia. His efforts against the Nazis almost convinced the Allies to consider him one of the "good guys" again, but his cavalier execution of libertine French Resistance hero Le Chevalier and his assault on a top-secret American base that was developing an occult super-weapon quickly dispelled this notion. His opposition to the Third Reich was primarily due to their dabbling in "forbidden" magic in any event.

Professor Purgatory spent the 1950s abroad, but returned to the States in the late 1960s, incensed by the culture of drug indulgence, sexual experimentation, and social rebellion. He compiled a long list of violent crimes during his second sojourn in the U.S., including nearly a hundred murders, several hundred aggravated assaults, and too many counts of arson, civil rights violations, grand theft, and property damage to count. He almost never engaged in the sort of massive, world-changing schemes that was typical of villains of his power level. He never sought to bring down the government by threatening nuclear Armageddon or mind-controlling the populace. He didn't try to rob Fort Knox or replace the President with a robot double or take out the national super-hero team. His M.O. was unpredictable—he would burn down a series of adult bookstore and strip clubs in New York one week, abduct a sultry, raunchy rock singer and surgically remove her vocal cords the next, and break the back of a counter-culture superhero a month after that. His thefts were limited to acquiring arcane knowledge and objects from old bookstores, museums, and classified government labs. It was also during this time in the states that he unleashed the pathetic but unbelievably dangerous Penitent on the world, a figure who would wreak his own brand of havoc on the United States over the decades.

Almost unbelievably, the Prof. was joined by a "kid sidekick" through most of

the 60s, Kid Righteous. The boy—who seemed to be about 12 when he was first spotted by the Prof's side in December, 1963—was attired like a cross between a medieval page and a military school cadet, and displayed strength and reflexes far beyond his age. The Kid never swore or engaged in vulgar behavior, but had a cruel sense of humor, taunting and pitilessly mocking his victims. He was armed with a pair of "Excruciation Pistols" that made their targets relive the worst moments of their lives. The Kid was, if anything, more vicious than his mentor, as evidenced by the carnage he inflicted against 60's anti-establishment icons Captain Underground and Nefertiti. The boy fanatic suddenly disappeared in the summer of 1970, leading most to speculate that the Professor disposed of his ward, but the lethal lad's final fate is still undetermined.

His reign of terror in the U.S. ended in 1972, when he did try something grand, a so-called "Ritual of Exaltation" which he claimed would "spiritually elevate the citizens of North America by destroying the capacity for sin"; after a horrified audience watched nearly 200 people turned into eerily smiling lobotomized automatons on national TV, three major super-teams converged on the scene (including the Noble Knights, meta-human kinsmen of the late Anton Noble). Even the Professor was forced to flee from those odds, narrowly escaping and making his way back to Europe. He returned to the States only once after that, in 1977, but his stay was brief. He fled America again after a clash with the openly gay superhero Advocate left his armor badly in need of repair (he managed to slay Advocate nonetheless) and his stateside lair was seized by the Paranormal Defense Initiative, a "black-ops" government organization. He did not leave empty-handed, as he took in tow a pair of formerly fallen women whom he had transformed into the Rage Angels.

In 1980 Professor Purgatory actually helped save the world by combining his might with a hastily assembled international hero-group to thwart the high-invincible Dr. Oni and the Avatars of Destruction. The Professor was willing to assist the heroes in

stopping Oni's campaign of world-wide devastation, but then abducted one of Oni's lieutenants, the plague-bearing Pestilence. Professor Purgatory hoped to use the pandemic causing villain in a horrible ritual that would unleash a new metaphysical mystic plague on the world, one that would make those he deemed wicked erupt in painful boils and debilitating tumors, making their fallen nature obvious to all. He was thankfully thwarted in this endeavor, after he ironically played a part in saving the world.

Though unsuccessful in his plan, he did receive a windfall from this incident. The remnants of the hero The Meta-Maestro, who had perished at the hands of Oni, would serve as the raw material for his loyal servant the Cretin.

The world believed Prof. Purgatory dead in 1983 when he disappeared after an epic battle with the Battalion of National Perfection, a contingent of Sino super-soldiers created to serve the People's Republic of China. Purgatory was on Red Chinese soil in search of the Dragon of Ascendant Harmony, a supernatural creature whose blood was rumored to hold the power to wash away all impurities. Though he had cloaked himself in an illusory guise, the communist government was tipped off to his presence in Beijing by his old enemy Mr. Chiang. The Communist Party was not going to tolerate a Western super-villain invading their nation to seize one of their supernatural resources; they set the untested, experimental Battalion on him, and the resultant clash caused hundreds of millions in property damage and decimated the ranks of the Battalion, but Purgatory was apparently killed in a massive explosion when the mutant Conflagration sacrificed himself by expending all his energy in one blast. The world sighed with relief at the end of his forty year career of menace.

In reality, Purgatory had survived the explosion, but decided to use his supposed death as a cover. He wanted time to rethink his goals and methods. For the next twenty-odd years he let the world think he was gone while he contemplated his future, pursued his studies and continued his experiments. He ventured out into the

world only occasionally to punish moral turpitude, and when he did so he was well-disguised. He conducted various tests on Regiment, the leader of the Chinese paranormals who had attacked him (the Prof. had recovered the body from the battlefield), studied ancient texts, and tentatively ventured into other planes where he first encountered the Borderer race and their astounding vessel (or whichever lair he's been holed up in for the past few decades, if you don't feel like using the Paradise Delayed). This would prove a wonderful boon, as the Borderers made excellent foot-soldiers, especially the young warrior named X'Hort. The race would also later bring him the alien egg that would hatch the Out-Warder, a dimension-warping servitor.

He occasionally made a few low-level excursions to deliver his twisted justice, but these missions were always brief and targeted only those not likely to be terribly missed. It was chaffing to operate in anonymity but the Professor did enjoy one great success during this somewhat humbling time, the discovery of Sister Splendor, who was to become his good right arm. Thereafter he let the Sister do much of the sordid week-to-week work of chastisement.

After over six decades of punishing sinners of all stripes, Professor Purgatory experienced a "crisis of faith". He had done everything he could to discourage sin and restore righteousness to the world, but he seemed no closer to regaining Heaven than ever. What had he missed—what was he overlooking? Then it struck him; he too had been corrupted by the world around him. The overwhelming presence of sin all around him had tainted his angelic being, weighing down his soul. He had acquired human vices—anger, pride, vanity—that prevented his return to the Celestial Hallways. How then could he transcend these blights and restore the pristine condition of his spirit?

After several years of arcane investigation and research, he arrived at a solution. Documents he discovered led him to believe that with the proper arcane materials he could construct a chamber that would transfer his spiritual flaws (acquired

through no fault of his, of course) to others, mortals who would suffer them as physical manifestations upon their persons. He would select the recipients of his sins carefully of course—they would have to be deserving of such treatment, and care would have to be taken the experience was instructive for them, ultimately for their own betterment. And he could not obtain the necessary components himself, as he was now too well-known among men, and he did not yet wish to reveal that he had survived the Beijing battle. As well, the members of his retinue were rarely able to operate with the subtlety that aspects of the plan would require—Sister Splendor, the Penitent, X'Hort—none were suitable. No, he would need suitable minions, new agents...yes, perhaps even sinners needing a chance for redemption. He put together a makeshift super-villain team that he dubbed the Motley Crew, in a rare moment of whimsy. This team included the ageless Teutonic villain Blitzenhammer, the oafish but ultra-strong Captain Kill-You, the enigmatic Vampire Girl, and American Indian super-tracker Warpath. Using the Motley Crew as agents, Purgatory was able to assemble his arcane machine and the necessary supply of victims, through the usual methods of violent assaults, kidnappings, and theft.

Professor Purgatory's attempt at achieving transcendence ultimately failed due to the valiant efforts of a relatively obscure band of super-heroes (what the final result would have been had he succeeded is still unknown) and his Transcendence Chamber was destroyed. Sadly, the heroes could do little for the victims of Purgatory's scheme, most of who were left to cope with permanent disabilities. Most of the Motley Crew ended up behind bars, a few escaped to surface shortly thereafter in the commission of other crimes, but Purgatory once again vanished. GM Note: The events described in the above paragraph occurred in the module *Promise of Purgatory*, also by PBW Games.

Though there were conflicting early reports that he was either dead or entombed in the bowels of an Ultra-Max federal penitentiary, neither proved correct. He surfaced a few months later, popping up

to help the notorious Cryptic Star from a S.W.A.T. team and wiping out a squad of federal agents, killing dozens of officers in the process.

Shortly thereafter, the Professor hijacked the broadcast frequencies of several communications satellites and made a televised address to the people of the world. He proclaimed that despite recent events, he still held great love and concern for the souls of humanity, and that he would reemerge after he determined what Almighty God wanted him to do. Visible with him during the telecast were Cryptic Star, two as yet unidentified women (though the one dressed in a crimson nun's habit has been tentatively identified as a suspect in numerous violent crimes along the West Coast), the armored grotesquerie known as the Penitent, and several shadowy, possibly monstrous figures lurking in the background. The fact that he now had a cadre of followers at his disposal further alarmed law enforcement.

Professor Purgatory is now lying low again, thinking and planning about how best to achieve salvation for himself and/or mankind. He is once again on the FBI most wanted list, and the Paranormal Defense Initiative has mobilized all available manpower to search for the Prof., led by special agent Paragon (A.K.A. Eric Noble, the great-grand nephew of Anton Noble).

The Chinese government is looking into their options to mount an assassination attempt against the Professor, as he is considered an enemy of the state. For the most part, however, the Prof's broadcast has not caused any sort of wide-scale response in the U.S. His most notorious acts in the 1960s were a long time ago. Besides, he has never threatened world domination or mass destruction, making him a lesser threat in an age of global terrorism.

GM's Option: Professor Purgatory and the legion of the Damned

If you are using Plain Brown Wrapper Games' supervillain supplement "More Bad Guys", you can make use of the following information. It describes Professor Purgatory's relationship to the world's most

dangerous supervillain team—the Legion of the Damned.

The Legion has taken an interest in the Professor, primarily for three reasons. First, although Prof. Purgatory does not launch world-shaking plots, his power level and unpredictability make him a threat to the status quo. Second, both Cryptic Star and Sister Splendor (The Legion of the Damned knows more of her than the authorities) are targeted for "induction" as associate members (i.e., indentured servitude).

Finally, one of the victims of the Prof.'s last caper was ex-supermodel turned Oscar winning actress Angelica De Lynn (the Prof's process left her extremely—and permanently—obese); though she got off easy next to some, her mother Arcadia is the sister of Philippe Jordan, French chemical industry magnate and member of the Steering Committee that directs the Legion of the Damned. Angelica is Philippe's favorite niece, and he is enraged over what Purgatory did to his "beautiful little Angel". While the personal vendettas of the individual members are prevented from influencing Legion business in theory, in practice this does not always hold. Still, for now the Legion has adopted a "watch and wait" attitude; they realize that they have the numbers to prevail if necessary but would likely suffer some bloody losses and might risk the organization's public exposure.

Dr. Dagon has been agitating for them to take more direct action, but refuses to give any clear reasons. Until he can mount a persuasive case, no further action will be taken, though the aquatic avenger may decide to make his own move if he deems it necessary.

Appearance and Demeanor

Professor Purgatory is a tall, well built man seemingly in his mid to late thirties (though actually much older). His skin is almost ghostly pale, a stark contrast to his flame-red hair and gold-flecked eyes. Blue-black glyphs, runes, and sigils adorn his skin—each decade more of these seem to appear on his body; though the Professor believes they signify his return to a perfect state of being, their true significance is unknown.

The first of these arcane brands manifested during a journey to Egypt in the 1943, while Nazi forces were still occupying much of Northern Africa. Professor Purgatory decimated a Nazi encampment and seized a cargo they were preparing to ship back to Germany, an ancient text that spoke of “an abomination beyond the like of which mankind has ever known, a thing untouched by the Hand of the Creator that lies in the still waters beneath the world”. After reading this passage, the first of the many tattoos that would adorn him appeared on the tip of his right index finger.

The Professor is still unsure of the nature of the monster described by the scroll; save that it is neither the biblical Leviathan nor the Midgard Serpent of Norse myth (Note: if you are using Plain Brown Wrapper Games' supplement “More Bad Guys” then the monster is Dagon's Master).

Another tattoo manifested itself six months before the Professor was involved in a clash with the demonic Dr. Oni and his Avatars of Destruction. From these instances, it may be that the sigils are a sort of “early warning system” against mammoth supernatural threats, but this is still just conjecture.

Clad in his flowing silver cloak and golden battle raiment, the Professor is quite an imposing figure. He always speaks and acts with a cold, aloof air, secure in the knowledge that he is morally superior to all those around him. His eyes seem focused on some far-distant vision no one else can perceive. He is unnerving to be around for any length of time. Occasionally his hair turns stark white when he manifests his powers; the reason for this is unknown, though the cosmetic change in no way alters his abilities or power level. In recent years he has exhibited a peculiar weakness to cold iron, the mythical bane of magical beings. This may mean the nature of his abilities is evolving in some way.

Many consider Prof. Purgatory to be a fire-and-brimstone fundamentalist Christian zealot, an impression reinforced by his obliteration of several gay bathhouses in the 1970s and his bloody campaign against abortion service providers in Scandinavia, but this is not the case. While clearly

subscribing to monotheism, the Professor has never especially targeted atheists, Muslims, pagans, or even homosexuals. He goes after those who indulge in acts of greed, hedonism, gluttony, promiscuity, and even inordinate vanity. He especially despises those whose public behavior corrupts or tempts others into depraved behavior. His behavior is difficult to predict, as the Prof. is as much a deranged occult experimenter and self-styled crusader as he is an armored power lord.

Adventures With Professor Purgatory

The Gospel of Saint Justice

Professor Purgatory develops a painful, masochistic crush on a superheroine named Lady Justice. She's a clean-cut, all-American, naively patriotic hero of the old school. America's sweetheart as well as its stern protector. You can find stats for her on page 29, under the adventure “Kingdom of Pain”.

The Professor has no idea what to do about his feelings for Lady Justice. Then he decides to surrender to her.

The PCs hear an astonishing story on the news. After decades of hiding and dozens of battles with the law, Professor Purgatory surrenders. He will give himself up, but only to the superheroine named Lady Justice. Only she is pure enough, he says, to be allowed to take him into custody. He sets the time and place and she hesitantly agrees to accept his surrender. Is this a trap?

Tensions run high as the appointed hour draws near. The Professor wants to surrender in a public plaza, in front of a federal courthouse. A lot of heavily armed law enforcement personnel are on hand in case things go screwy. The PCs might want to put in an appearance, too.

At exactly the appointed moment, the Professor appears from nowhere on the plaza, walks up to Lady Justice and kneels before her. He's wearing his battle armor, but he makes no effort to resist her as she takes him into custody. Only if the PCs lose their cool and attack him do things go awry. If you really want to add a fight, then some old enemy of the Professor's (Misery, for

example) may show up and attack him as he tries to surrender.

But it's only after he gives himself up that the real problems begin. Once he is put in a temporary cell at the federal courthouse where he gave himself up, he refuses to speak to anyone but Lady Justice and doesn't respond to requests to take off his armor or questions about his legal defense. Different jurisdictions begin to squabble over him and no one has any idea if his specially reinforced cell can hold him or not.

PCs with government contacts will be asked to help debrief the Professor, but he remains eerily silent and totally uncooperative, no matter that they do or say. If Lady Justice is present at any of these sessions, he answers only to her. She visits him often, at his request and they talk endlessly, praying together for hours. Soon she has fallen completely under the spell of his personal magnetism and the two of them hatch an insane scheme.

Lady Justice and Professor Purgatory break out of the courthouse together (the GM should contrive for the PCs to be on hand when this happens). Together the two of them flee across the continent, across the Atlantic Ocean, and into Israeli airspace.

The Israelis panic and scramble fighters and perhaps a super-team of their own to intercept the two superhuman invaders—and they don't buy the argument that Lady Justice is under some kind of mind control. If they kill her, America's relations with Israel could undergo a massive shift and the whole Middle Eastern balance of power could be upset. PCs who are chasing the Professor could find themselves in a three-way aerial battle over Jerusalem, with the fate of the region hanging in the balance. And Misery may show up for a piece of the action, too.

If they aren't stopped, Lady Justice and Professor Purgatory will go to the hill where Christ supposedly was crucified. There Lady Justice will crucify Professor Purgatory, and then hang herself. If he isn't taken down by the PCs the Professor will hang on his cross for three days, persevering with his fantasy despite being

struck repeatedly by lightning. At the end of that time, he won't have died or have ascended to Heaven, so he'll get bored, pull the nails out of his flesh, hop down and walk away.

Righteous Vengeance

An overweight, unshaven, slovenly middle-aged man starts foiling crimes across the city. This beefy gray-haired codger wears a domino mask, swimming trunks, a grubby white t-shirt and a cape. He is seldom seen without a can of beer in one hand. He tells everyone at the scene of the robberies he has foiled that he's Kid Righteous, and that he has returned to strike fear in the hearts of wicked sinners everywhere.

During the course of an interview, "Kid Righteous" reveals that he kept out of the public eye for so long because he feared his one-time mentor Professor Purgatory. He says that the Professor regularly abused him in unthinkable ways. The Kid ran away years ago and he's been hiding ever since, but now that he's found out he has incurable liver disease (here he pauses to wipe some beer foam out of his gray moustache) he feels brave enough to go back to fighting crime. And he's written a tell-all book that will expose the Professor's secrets.

Professor Purgatory has been much in the news lately and Kid Righteous' claims soon provoke media frenzy. He won't do sit-down interviews or scheduled public appearances, but he makes himself available by phone to any reporter who wants to talk to him. He doesn't specify what kind of abuse the Professor subjected him to, but he implies it was something sordid. He really does have a publisher lined up, and they are being very cagey about what's in his book.

A reporter notices that Kid Righteous bears a strong resemblance to a part-time muck-raking journalist named Larry Gerber and asks him about it in an interview. After a long pause, Kid Righteous admits that's the alias he's used for the past twenty years or so. He did actually try to continue fighting evil from behind a

typewriter, but he never had much success with it.

Disaster is clearly looming on the horizon for both Larry and his publisher. The PCs may want to protect them. The very first time the PCs show up anywhere that Larry is talking to reporters, Professor Purgatory appears with murder on his mind.

"It isn't nice to tell lies, Larry." He says gently as he prepares a killing blow.

"I know! I know!" Larry sobs. "But can't you forgive me, just for old time's sake?"

"We had no such times. The Professor smiles sadly. "You were never Kid Righteous, Larry."

"But I was I was! And we punished the wicked and we had all kinds of adventures..."

The Professor shakes his head. "No Larry," he replies "The real Kid Righteous will never return. Not ever. I know this for a certain fact. Now close your eyes, it will only hurt for a moment"

Presumably the PCs will try to stop Professor Purgatory from killing Larry Gerber. Whether or not he survives this encounter, he will be dead in a few weeks of liver failure. He never makes another public appearance and his book is abruptly canceled.

PCs who investigate the aftermath of this sad affair will find that Larry was living at home with his parents and that his whereabouts were accounted for during the years when Kid Righteous was active. He couldn't have been the same boy. Pictures of Larry from that period look nothing like Kid Righteous. The publisher's investigators have already uncovered these facts, which is why they canceled the book's debut. For a while there is intense media speculation about what the memoir might have contained and who Kid Righteous really was. Then the press gets bored of the subject and it fades away.

It's up to the GM as to whether or not Larry's publisher is off the hook. If the PCs want to go stake out their offices, reward them for their vigilance with another punch-up. The Professor has no time to sort out the various editors—if he attacks

the place he'll try to kill everyone inside and burn it to the ground.

APPENDIX I: LAIRS OF THE ORDO ULTIMA

Professor Purgatory has been lying low on his extradimensional ship the *Paradise Delayed* for years, hovering invisibly just outside our reality. This is not the only hiding place he may have found. We present you here with three different lairs that Professor Purgatory and his team might occupy, including the *Paradise Delayed*. The GM could decide that any one of them is his primary base of operations. He could retreat to a second one after the first gets destroyed, or even discover it in the course of the adventure and decide to relocate there.

We have brief summaries of each listed below, followed by in-depth, room-by-room write-ups with maps and game stats.

1) The *Paradise Delayed*.

Somewhere beyond the farthest dimensions, a giant spacecraft lies marooned in an endless sea of nothing. No one knows who built it or how it came to be trapped in the empty place called “The White.” Nor has anyone ever explored all its corridors and chambers. In fact we only call it a spaceship because we’re not sure what else to classify it as.

Professor Purgatory found it in his wanderings, long ago, and he has built a home for himself here. Other creatures, simple-minded brutes called the “Borderers” already lived in the ship and the Professor has become their god. They are not the ones who built it—they just found it and decided that it was a better place to live than none. Other things stalk the vessel’s lower halls. Some of them are the shambling

former test subjects of the Professor’s failed experiments. Others were here long before he came. He’s never bothered to clean out all the monstrosities skulking in the depths because he’s never seen the need.

2) Purgatory’s Garden

A domed garden on a dead planet, full of weird plants and flowers. The Professor found it and made it into one of his refuges.

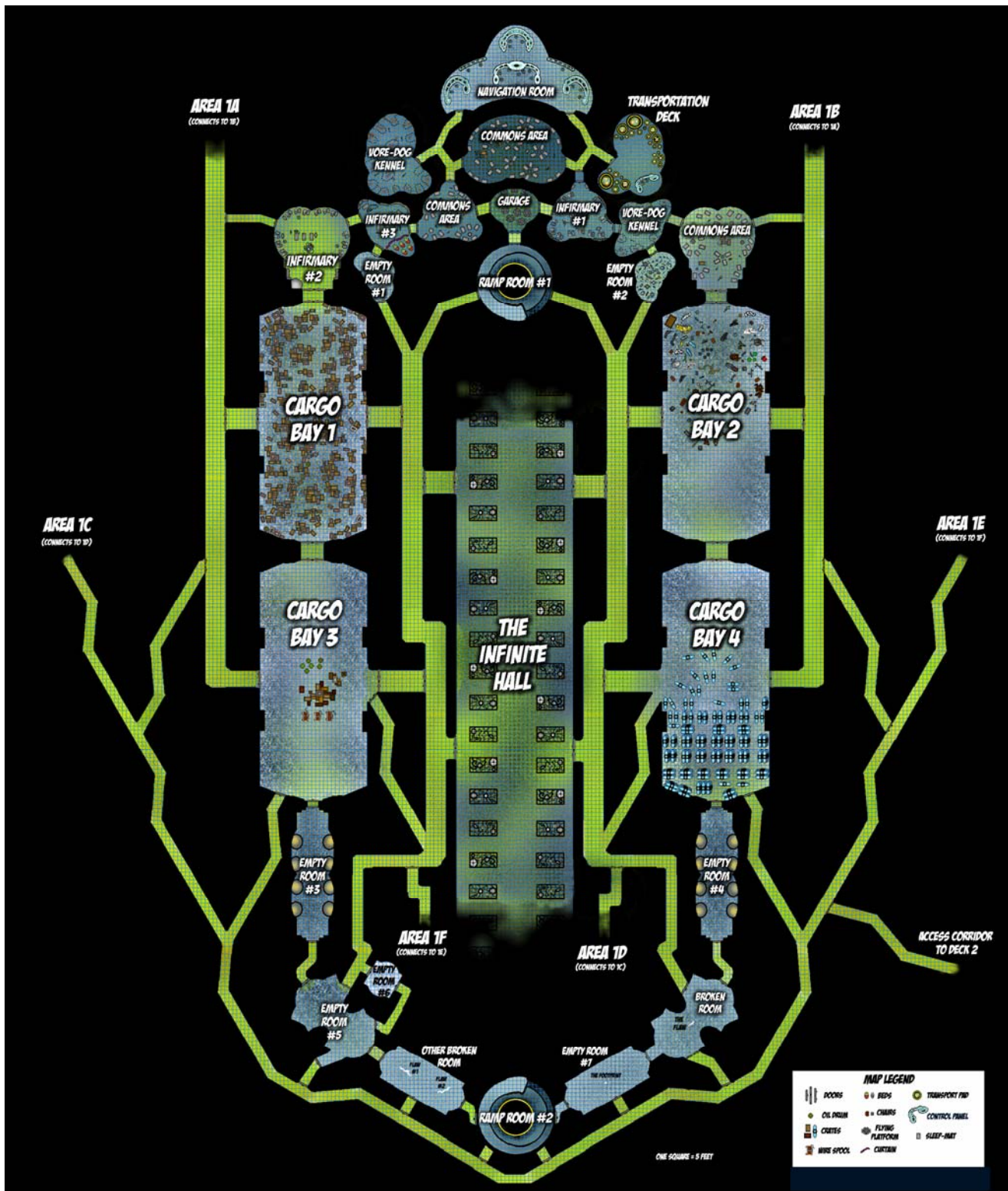
The garden has been here for a very long time, since whatever disaster overwhelmed this world. It’s a beautiful, eerie place. There are disturbing signs that it may be haunted and that sinister forces from the desolate, lifeless wastes beyond the dome are massing against it. So far the Professor either hasn’t noticed or does not care.

3) Soviet Science City Six

Purgatory’s Garden may be haunted, but Soviet Science City Six certainly is. This huge underground complex lies beneath the Siberian tundra. Built during the Cold War for “esoteric weapons research” it was the scene of terrible occult experiments for decades. More than twenty years ago, they performed one awful experiment too many, and it lay empty, silent and dead until Professor Purgatory took up residence.

Less tamed and more dangerous than either of his other lairs, the walking dead still, stumble around its grim concrete halls. The Professor’s encampment looks more like a bivouac, a toehold in this hell of dark corridors and echoing chambers. He has barely begun to explore its mysteries.

The Paradise Delayed



Toughness: 15

Size: Awesome

Features: Combat Simulator, Communications, Gym, Hanger, Holding Cells, Infirmary, Isolated, Laboratory, Library, Living Space, Powers (Super-Movement [Dimensional]; Extra: Useable on Others, Teleport; Extra: Portal), Power System, Workshop

Overview

This ancient dimension-spanning ship floats adrift in an empty dimension called "The White." The White is a featureless blank expanse of nothingness. It is possible to breathe out there, somehow, but there is no water and nothing to eat. You can move in any direction in the White at your normal speed (whether that's walking, swimming, flying or whatever) including up and down. While people don't feel weightless and don't float as though they were in zero-g, they can stand in any direction—sideways, upside-down, it all feels the same.

Sometimes chunks of matter get sucked into the White from other dimensions and float forever in the nothing, or weird vortexes form out of nowhere and disgorge weird debris from other layers of reality.

No one knows how long the Paradise Delayed has been here or who might have built it. When Professor Purgatory first found the ship, it was already inhabited by the brutish "Borderers", but they didn't build it. They came here from some other place, long ago and moved into the deserted vessel.

The Paradise Delayed can't move by itself. If it had engines, they have long since ceased to function. But most of its systems still run, including Life Support, so it's good enough for Professor Purgatory.

No one has ever completely explored the vessel and all kinds of strange things could still be lurking on its lower level. There are ancient storage containers in some of its cargo holds that might hold anything at all. We leave the details up to the GM.

Each minute the heroes spend exploring there is a 15% (1-3 on d20)

chance they will encounter some of the ship's inhabitants—either a pair of Vore-Dogs accompanied by four Borderer warriors (1-5), a wild pack of six Vore-Dogs (6-7) escaped from the kennels, or a group of Borderer women and children (8-20). These Borderer non-combatants are Professor Purgatory's servants, performing whatever menial tasks he requires.

GM's Note: Weird Spatial Effects and Abnormal Reality

Space folds back on itself inside the Paradise Delayed. Gravity functions more or less normally, "up" and "down" remain completely consistent throughout the ship, and the positions of objects and rooms don't change when you aren't looking at them. But there are passages that connect to one another in ways that don't make logical sense (see the map and the room descriptions). If a character manages to bash a hole in one of its interior walls, roll at random for which room the hole leads to. You could wind up in the room next door or one on the other side of the ship. The hole is permanent—until it is repaired it will only connect those two rooms together. For some reason breaking through a wall will only lead you into other rooms on the same level. If, on the other hand, you smash your way through a floor or a ceiling, you could find yourself breaking into the floor or ceiling of any room on any level. Make a hole in a floor and it will always lead to a ceiling, make a hole in a ceiling and it will always lead up through the floor, but it could lead to the level above you, the level below you or anywhere else. It could even be the room you are standing in. While the odds are against it, it is technically possible to accidentally punch a hole in the floor you are standing on by breaking through the ceiling above you. Just as with making holes in the walls, once you have broken a hole in a ceiling or floor, the two rooms are permanently connected.

X-Ray Vision and Clairvoyance are almost useless here. If you look through a wall or project your consciousness past it with clairvoyance, you see a random room on the same level—perhaps

even the room that you are in. The problem is that it's a different room each time you use the power (unless of course you roll the same room once again. Peering through a floor or ceiling reveals a random room from any level. Character with the ability to walk through walls can use it normally here. Walking through a wall permanently fixes the identity of the room on the other side of the wall, just like bashing a hole through it. Characters who use Astral Projection, on the other hand, will have to roll a random room every time they pass through a wall, no matter how many times they've passed through it before, and may soon become hopelessly lost.

The First Deck

Haunted by Borderers, Vore Dogs, discards, the Goop and who knows what else, Deck One is a dangerous place, and not even the Professor knows everything it contains. It is much larger than any of the other decks.

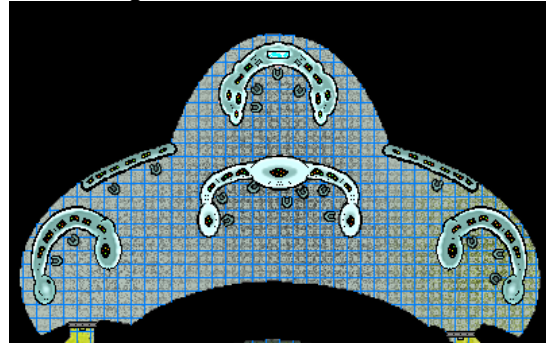
A Note About Doors

All of the doors aboard the *Paradise Delayed* can be locked, but few of them ever are—it confuses the Borderers.

There used to be security keys that would open various types of doors, but they have all long since been lost. Any door can be set to open with a combination, but it takes A Notice Roll vs. DC 20 to figure this out and a Computer roll vs. DC 15 to actually set a combination. Professor Purgatory has already figured out how to do it, and doesn't have to make a roll. It takes a full round for anyone to set a combination, and a Movement Action to unlock a door if they know the combination. For some reason, any and all doors on board the ship unlock themselves at Professor Purgatory's touch. The *Paradise Delayed* seems to have at last accepted him as its master.

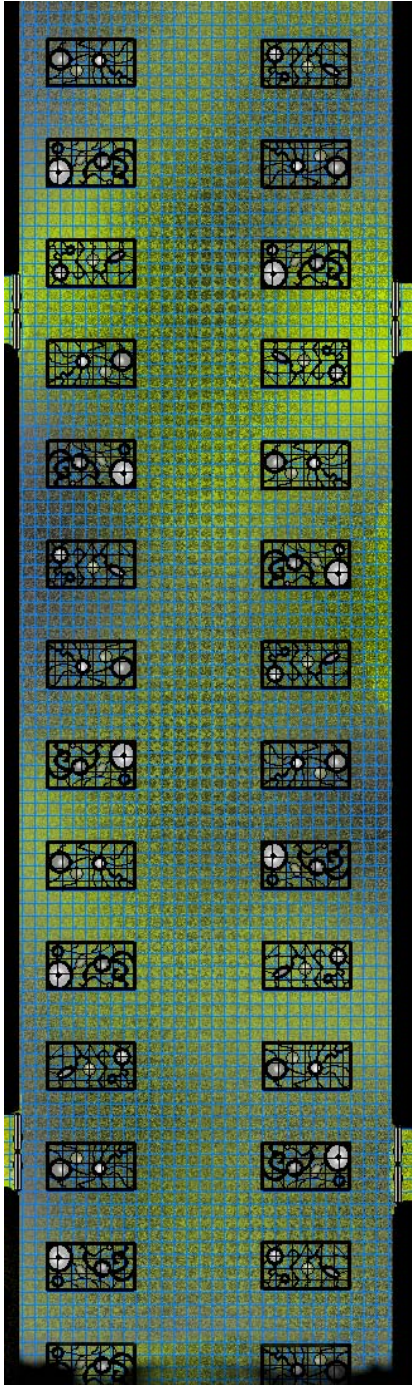
Most of the doors have a Toughness of 10. The wooden doors on the passenger quarters aren't as tough, and have a Toughness of 5. The Navigation Room, Infirmary Bay #3 and the doors which lead into the Professor's personal quarters all have a Toughness of 15.

The Navigation Room



The room is dominated by a massive view screen that allows those navigating the ship to see outside into the unearthly non-matter of the White. One spacious copper-colored metal chair is mounted on a dais near the back, raised a few feet above floor level. This is the only seat that a normal human can comfortably fit in, as the others are designed for the blocky physiques of the Borderers. Banks of weird electronic instruments line both sides of the room, lights blinking and screens humming. Deciphering the controls requires a DC 30 Intelligence check and at least ten minutes time spent examining the set up.

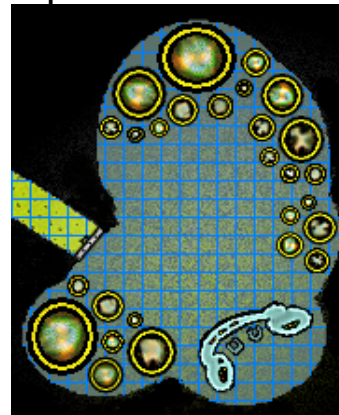
The Infinite Hall



The door opens into what looks like a gigantic, impossibly long corridor. Huge rectangular slabs of metal march off to infinity in both directions. These slabs have open sides, and appear to be packed with broken gears, immense steel balls and stranger, less identifiable shapes. They might be alien computer banks or modern art or monuments to forgotten gods or

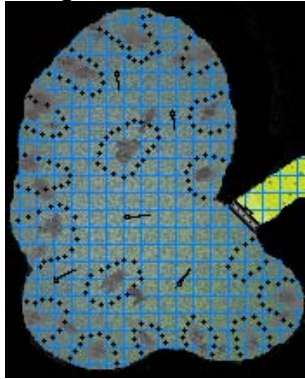
anything. Far off in the distance, right near the vanishing point, the PCs can see a group of figures, too far away to make out clearly (unless one of the group has telescopic vision, in which case they'll figure this room out almost immediately). If the PCs approach the distant figures, they move farther away. Whenever they think to ask, or GM decides it's appropriate, the PCs notice that the figures always move the way they do, like the figures in a mirror. They are looking at themselves. The room is only about a hundred yards long, but it folds back in on itself like a worm devouring its own tail. After they have traveled far enough, the PCs find the same door they entered through.

The Transportation Deck



This room bears a vague resemblance to its Star Trek namesake, though the control panel is designed to be operated by the blocky four-fingered hands of Borderers, not humans, and all the equipment is labeled in alien hieroglyphs. The room allows teleportation between the White and the earthly dimension and back, as well as anywhere within the confines of the ship. One striking difference is that the transportation platforms themselves are all of unequal height, and arranged in an odd pattern; this is necessary for the teleportation/dimensional travel functions to work properly. A DC 30 Intelligence check is needed to comprehend the controls.

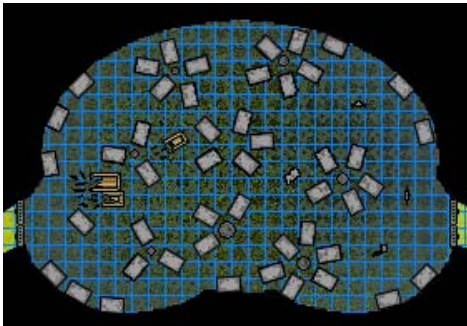
The Vore-Dog Kennels



This is where young Vore-Dogs are whelped and cared for until they are ready to be trained as guardians. The Vore-Dogs are kept in makeshift cages of steel-mesh, fed and cared for by Borderer servant women equipped with feeding spoons mounted on long metal poles (two are present when the heroes come upon the scene); the poles are also used to beat back the beasts if they become too excited. The room is not terribly clean, the smells of rust and ozone fill the air and unidentifiable liquids pool on the floor.

See Page 168 for stats on the Vore Dogs.

Commons Area

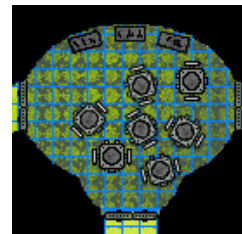


One of the Borderers' communal living areas. Noisy, crowded, and squalid by human standards, yet at the same time almost antiseptically clean. Borderers lead cluttered lives and don't pick up their living areas any better than small human children, but their bodies don't produce a lot of waste products, either. This area is largely filled with women and children, as most male Borderers are either off on raiding missions, patrolling the ship, or in one of the vessel's infirmaries.

Each family has its own communal sleeping mat, woven from grey metallic fibers. The mats cluster in groups, but not according to which families are related to one another—the Borderers can barely keep track. The way they choose groups is mysterious to non-Borderers. Almost every group has a large communal cooking pot in the center of their cluster of mats, but not all of them do, and Borderers often eat from other groups' pots when they happen to be nearby. To human senses the pots smell very strange; more like a crucible or a smelting pit than a kitchen.

There are three major Borderer warrens on the first deck. They don't make war on one another, or seem to have separate tribal identities. Why they live apart is a mystery.

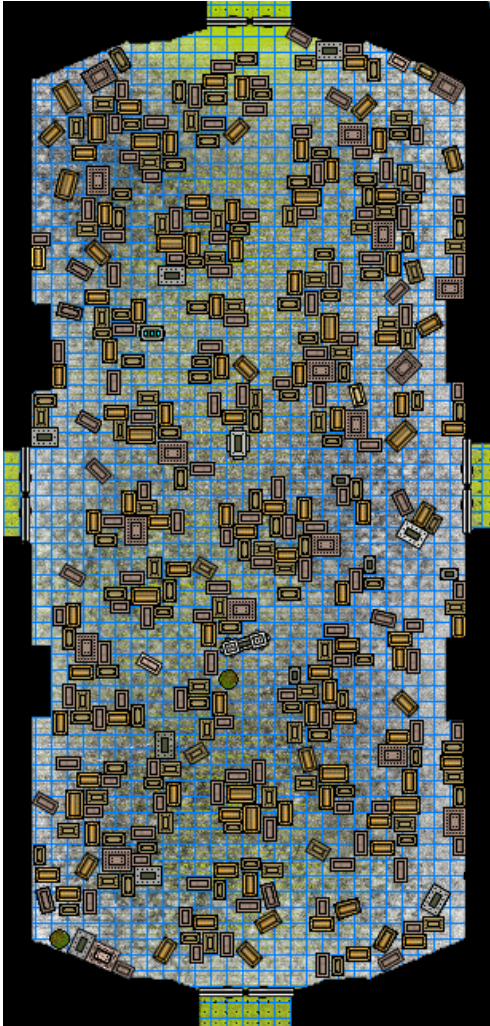
“Garage”



The Professor stores a number of the Borderers' flying platforms here. There are some work tables and equipment on one wall that could be used to repair and maintain the craft, but the Borderers lack the intelligence and Professor Purgatory lacks the patience to do very much work here, so the workspace goes largely unused.

If a PC wants to pick up a tool and use it as a weapon, the GM should let them. They can find everything from huge, weirdly-shaped wrenches that do +3 damage to arc-welders that do +5. The GM should work out the precise details.

Cargo Bay 1



All of the ship's cargo bays are huge, with seventy-foot high ceilings. Professor Purgatory has piled huge heaps of supplies in here. Sometimes you can find older, weirder things that previous tenants have left behind.

Bay #1 is packed with crates of the Professor's supplies, some dating back to the 1970s or before. The crates are stacked four high, and sometimes are perilously wobbly. The bay is poorly lit, deep shadows are everywhere and nearly anything could be hiding in the dark nearby.

If the GM feels cruel, the PCs can risk getting lost among the endless piles of crates, or reach a place where they've been stacked ineptly and a failed Reflexes Save vs. DC 10 will bring a pile of them crashing down on top of the party (damage +7 to anyone in a five foot radius, or else whatever the GM thinks is appropriate,

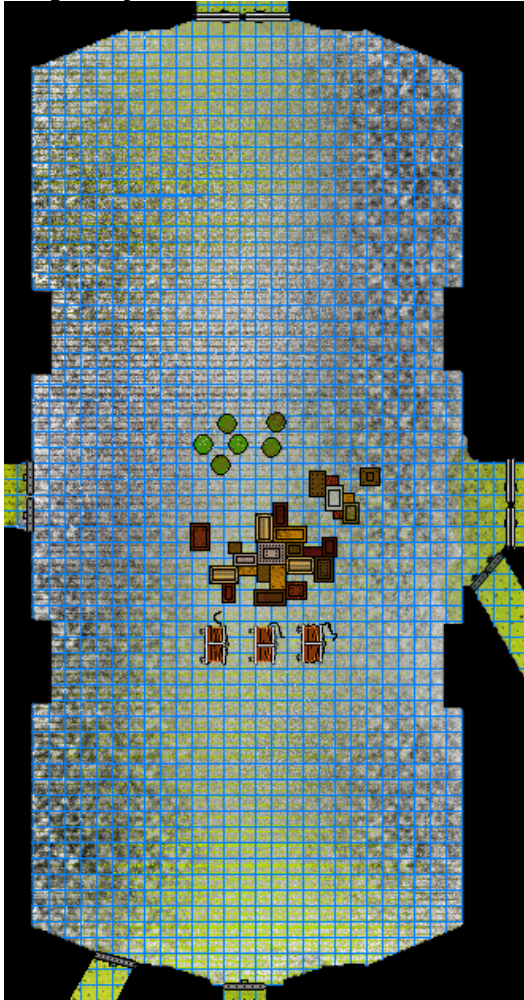
based on the circumstances). The Borderers are supposed to guard the supplies, but don't stand watch and sometimes raid them for edible pieces of metal and for equipment. The Professor thinks it would be beneath him to care.

Cargo Bay #2



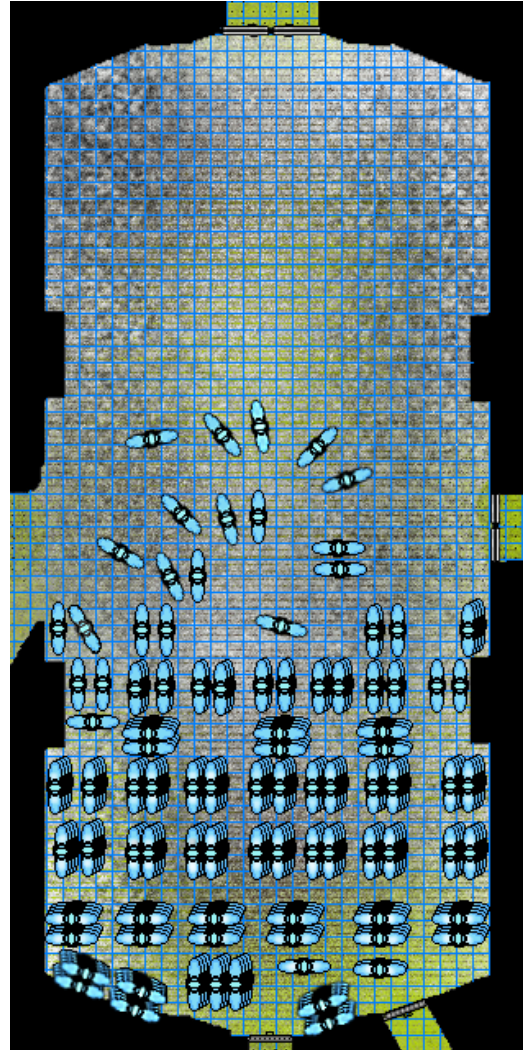
Directly adjacent to a major nest of Borderers, this cargo bay is largely empty of the Professor's supplies, and instead holds whatever random trophies the Borderers have managed to snatch on their raids. Toilets, hunks of metal, pieces of sidewalk, fur coats, designer tennis shoes, old newspapers, lamps, car bumpers and anything else the GM cares to throw into the mess lie in a tumbled heap, waiting for the day the Borderers figure out what to do with any of it. Even though they have, at present, no use for most of the stuff in this room, they will guard it fiercely.

Cargo Bay #3



Nearly empty, this massive room is where Professor Purgatory keeps most of the supplies for his laboratory, workshop and personal quarters. Crates of fine wines rest next to bundles of pipes and huge spools of wire. Cases full of glassware racks and new saw blades rest near unopened boxes of cologne and expensive bath soaps. The Borderers have learned that Professor Purgatory will inflict savage punishment on anyone who breaks into these stores, so they won't raid them. They even make a half-hearted attempt to guard the room for him. There is a 1/2 chance that the PCs will find two male Borderers standing watch outside each of the doors whenever they happen by.

Cargo Bay #4



About half full, this bay still contains some strange blue crates left by one of the ship's previous owners. The crates are all identical, all fourteen feet long by five feet high by five feet wide, and all made of a strange plastic-like substance that has a Toughness of 6. They can be opened with a crooked metal tool, about six inches in length. One or two of these tools can be found lying around in the room's corners. If you open a crate by sticking a tool into the hole on the front and rotating it counter-clockwise, the whole front side melts away into nothingness. The Borderers have never figured this out and prefer to blast or rip the crates open. Most of the unopened crates are empty, or contain a few grains of a soft, popcorn-like material which defies conventional analysis, but about one in ten holds weirdly shaped metal ingots of various types.

Empty Room #1



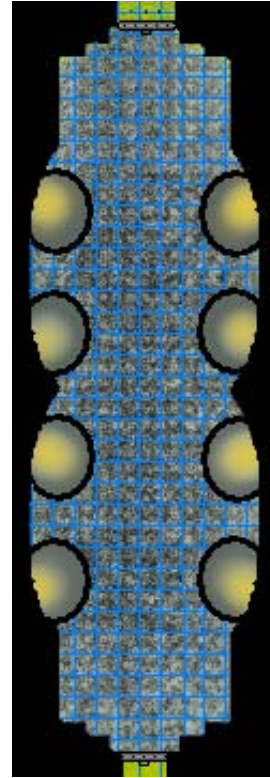
A narrow, well-lit room with a very high ceiling. If Professor Purgatory is conducting any cruel experiments in Infirmary Bay #3, then 2-3 Borderers will be standing guard here. Otherwise, the room is vacant.

Empty Room #2



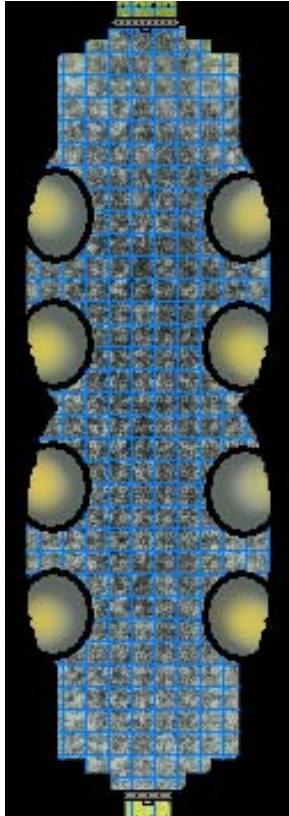
A tall, narrow chamber filled with incomprehensible broken machinery and trash the Borderers have discarded. No one can make sense of the weird mechanical fragments strewn around the room. No PC gadgeteers can improvise any kind of equipment out of them—they're just too strange. It's as though they were engineered to fit a completely different set of physical laws.

Empty Room #3



Very tall (about sixty feet) and uncomfortably narrow for its height, huge pipes come out of the wall and run into the floor. If a PC tries break into one of the pipes, they have a Hardness of 15. Nothing is in the pipes, although the air smells acrid and stale. A character who tries to explore the pipes from the inside will find that they bend back on themselves though a ripple in space and connect only with the pipes on the opposite wall. What function do they serve? Even the Professor doesn't know.

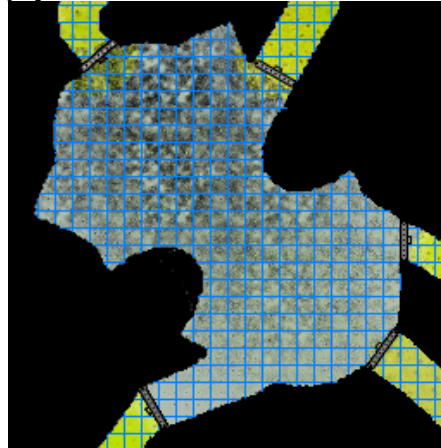
Empty Room #4



Another empty room, with more pipes running down the walls. See the description of the previous room to find out more about the pipes and where they lead.

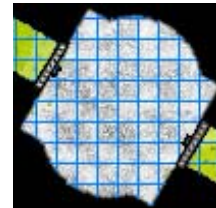
There is an odd temporal anomaly which visits this room from time to time. Whenever the PCs pass through it, there is a 1/5 chance (or the GM can just throw this at them on a whim) that they encounter the anomaly. One of the PCs (it should be one who doesn't have super-speed or any powers related to time-control) suddenly starts moving half as fast as the other PCs. Everything suddenly looks tinged with blue to them (the consequence of having the wavelengths of all the light reaching them get shortened) and the other PCs seem to rush about at incredible speed, speaking in high-pitched squeaky voices. Any PC with Time Control can fix this temporal glitch by taking an action and rolling vs. DC 10. Otherwise, the time distortion effect lasts for three rounds.

Empty Room #5



This oddly-shaped, empty chamber has remained vacant for a very long time. Nothing can be found here but the dust of a thousand years. The layer of dust on the floor is so thick, in fact, that anyone crossing the room on foot (who isn't immaterial or using some other such trick) will leave a trail that anyone can follow without even having to make a roll.

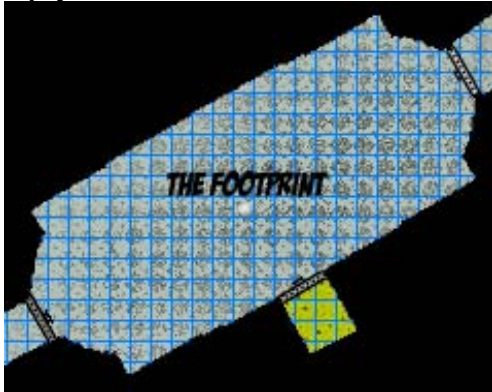
Empty Room #6



A smaller, empty room, brightly lit by glowing patches on its 10 foot high ceiling. The light is uncomfortably bright in here, for no apparent reason. It always seems to be spotlessly clean, although no one ever cleans it.

There is another temporal distortion in here, like the one in Empty Room 4. Every time they venture into the room, there is a 1/5 chance that two of the PCs will start moving at double-speed for a round. Everything suddenly looks tinged with red to them, and their fellow PCs seem to move in slow motion.

Empty Room #7



Empty and devoid of features, a thick layer of dust lies on the floor of this room. In the middle of the dust is a single footprint. It looks like it was made by a woman's bare foot. On closer examination, the foot had claws. The ceiling in this room is very high, at least fifty feet, and the light comes from a glowing band that runs around the chamber at about the twenty-foot level. The ceiling is shrouded in darkness. Could something be lurking up there? The answer, of course, is up to the GM.

Infirmiry Bay 1



Professor Purgatory has converted this room into a medical treatment center for the Borderers. It looks not unlike a first aid station, save that little consideration is given for either the comfort or privacy of the patients.

A total of eight Borderer warriors are in this room, along with two novice warriors (males in late adolescence physically equal to Borderer females), and all are obviously suffering from various combat related injuries. They are lying on

cots or sitting up on the examinations tables, being tended to by two Borderer matrons (their "nurses"), or the medic android (see description following). Limbs are bandaged and splinted, open wounds are treated with some sort of sour-smelling paste, and pastel-colored tablets are popped into their open mouths by the females.

None of the Borderers will attack the PCs—they will be startled to see strangers aboard their vessel but will simply gaze curiously, not initiating violence unless the heroes do something to provoke them. If forced to fight, assume that the Borderers suffer -2 to their Attack rolls and Toughness saves due to their wounds. None of them have any of their standard weapons with them—they will be forced to fight unarmed.

The nurses and the medical android will not fight under any circumstances. It will not occur to any of the Borderers to use medical tools as improvised weapons—the concept that something could be used both to hurt and to heal people is well beyond their mental capacity.

The Borderers are made of more robust materials than fragile earthlings, and the tools used to repair their flesh look very ominous to human eyes. Huge motorized blades, drills and wickedly shaped tools rest in racks on the walls. The Borderers nurses are overworked and do not have the time to keep the area very clean, but the Borderer body fluids do not look or smell anything like ours, so the odors and stains here are just weird, not disgusting.

The medical android (if such a human word is appropriate) is a cylindrical, 4 1/2 foot tall undulating mass of feelers and tentacles; the thing scuttles along the floor on four stubby three-toed feet. Its appearance may or may not be a clue to the nature of the Borderers now extinct masters. The robot is designed to diagnose and treat the ailments of the Borderer crew, not human beings or other living organisms. It can re-form its limbs into any surgical implements it needs and synthesize any number of medicinal drugs within its body.

The android can communicate in English, having assimilated the language from interaction from Professor Purgatory and the Ordo Ultima, but conversing with it

will be of little value to the PCs, as its knowledge is limited to the scope of its medical duties. It could conceivably be reprogrammed with the data needed to properly treat human beings, but the utterly weird, alien nature of the android would require a character making such an attempt to succeed on a both a Computers skill check and a Craft (Chemical—the thing is a bio-chemical construct) skill check against DC 35.

The android was part of an entire complement of such artificial life forms designed to attend to the crew's needs, but it is one of only two remaining operable on the ship (Professor Purgatory has not bothered to repair the others). The android's stats are as follows:

Alien Medical Android

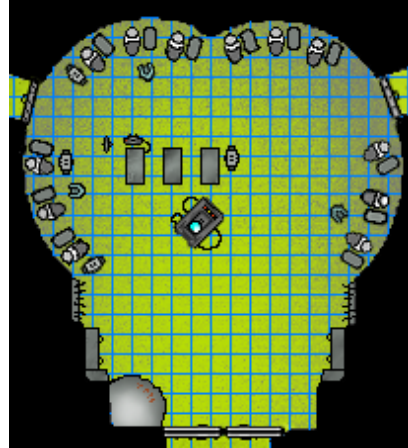
Str: 10 Dex: 20 Con: N/A
Int: 20 Wis: 10 Cha: 10
Initiative: +5 Attack: +5 Defense: +10
Toughness Save: +0 Fortitude Save: N/A
Reflex Save: +5 Willpower Save: +0

Feats: Improvised Tools, Inventor (used to create surgical tools and drugs/treatments).

Skills: Craft (chemical): +16 (+21),
Knowledge (Life Sciences): +16 (+21),
Language (English), Medicine: +16 (+21),
Notice: +8.

Powers: Additional Limbs 3 (8 tentacles),
Super Movement (Wall Crawling), Super
Senses (Blindsight, Detect Life Energies).

Infirmiry Bay 2



The Professor has partly converted this room to human use, using it to tend to the medical needs of both the local Borderer tribe and any human guests he has brought aboard. This bay is much cleaner than the first infirmary, although human patients would still find the Borderer's odd smells and intimidating-looking medical tools on the walls unnerving.

The Borderer nurses here have been trained to care for human patients, and unless they have been instructed specifically not to render aid to the PCs, they will give them assistance as a matter of course. They are efficient caregivers, but not very bright, and incapable of coping with unfamiliar medical conditions. They will attempt to treat a human PC to the best of their ability, but have only the equivalent of 4 ranks of the Medicine skill.

At any given hour of the day, there will be three nurses in the infirmary, standing idle or mending their garments unless they have a patient. There is a 1/3 chance that between one and four Borderer males will be here as patients, in various states of injury. Unlike the nurses, they will know that the PCs are intruders, and may attack them or run to the nearby warren to get help, depending on how badly they are injured.

Sitting in one corner of the bay is what appears to be some sort of transparent plastic tent (Toughness 10, Impervious to blunt force); odd markings are painted on the surface of the bubble (this would translate as "quarantine"); inside are three Borderers—one male, one female, and one

child—and the second remaining medical android.

Every member of the Borderer family is suffering from some sort of skin-wasting disease. Soft, crumbly looking red patches mar their hides. The male contracted the illness while on a raid into a previously uncharted dimension, and passed it on to his unfortunate mate and offspring. The Professor has isolated them out of caution, though the sickness does not appear to be airborne. A mystic code word allows passage in and out of the bubble, allowing the speaker to meld through the gel-like substance of the bubble's walls. The illness is not contagious to humans, even if the PCs are exposed.

Infirmiry Bay 3



This area stands out from the other two infirmaries, as it more far closely resembles a typical human hospital setting—the medical equipment in the room is mostly recognizable, and the signs and labels are in English. Borderers from the nearby warren avoid this place; none would ever consent to be treated here, even if badly hurt or crippled. Professor Purgatory once used this room to perform grotesque medical experiments on anyone that earned his wrath, including a few Borderers that rebelled against his takeover of their ship. He has had little time for these pursuits of late, but the infirmiry still carries the smells of death and pain; though the room has been scrubbed clean, a faint but noticeable stench hangs in the air, the acrid scents of blood and human waste mixed with unidentifiable chemical odors.

A red curtain divides off one corner of the room. Behind it is a recovery room of sorts. The laboratory portion contains

beakers of bubbling chemicals, several operating tables, vats of formaldehyde containing dissected body parts and even whole specimens, logbooks containing entries about past subjects and procedures, and assorted occult paraphernalia. Evil-looking surgical tools and devices line the walls; most of them are stained permanent rust red. Given the archaic (and awful) look of some of the tools, the use they have been put to is not hard to guess at. The most jarring detail about this side of the infirmiry bay is the row of dissecting tables, and the fact that they all have restraining straps on them.

The restraints on one of the most sturdily-built tables are made of some sort of hyper-steel alloy (Toughness 20). One set of restraints has been ripped open from the inside.

A simple DC 10 Notice check allows the PCs to locate any number of the useful medical supplies contained in the room—common drugs of all sorts (from antibiotics to painkillers to stimulants, all properly labeled), surgical tools, and several completely stocked first-aid kits. A DC 15 Knowledge (arcane lore) check allows the heroes to identify six beakers of “Restorative Fluid”, each dose of which confers the benefits of ten ranks of the Healing power upon the imbiber.

The recovery room side of the infirmiry bay has five actual beds with sheets and cushions instead of unpadded benches and cots. This room may be occupied or not, at the discretion of the GM. Here are stats and descriptions for three possible occupants.

2) Doc Magenta

An attractive middle-aged black woman strapped to a gurney, spouting forth an endless stream of words, sentences, and mathematical equations. She speaks primarily in French, but also intersperses words and phrases in English and German. This is Doc Magenta—a female adventurer/occultist of the late 1960s who run afoul of Professor Purgatory during one of the Professor’s European escapades.

The Professor captured Doc Magenta and subjected her to arcane neurosurgery, in the hope of opening up her

mind to the “higher dimensions of celestial being”. This effort worked, after a fashion; since that time Doc Magenta has been in waking coma, speaking non-stop as her mortal mind attempts to process the fundamental truths of the universe. Most of what she says is incomprehensible gibberish, but on occasion her words reveal some lost, ancient secret, a cryptic glimpse of coming events, or the solution to some fundamental question that has plagued scientist or philosophers throughout recorded history. This is why the Professor has continued to care for her for the past thirty-five years, even going so far as to administer longevity enhancing treatments that have slowed her aging to roughly half the normal rate (which is why the now 70 year old doctor appears to be in her late 40s). He only recently had her transported her to the Paradise Delayed, which is why she is on a gurney.

It requires a DC 20 Knowledge (popular culture) skill check for characters to recognize Doc Magenta (DC 15 for heroes with a Western European background). It is beyond the PCs’ ability to bring Doc Magenta out of her current state, but they may be able to effect a cure (GM’s discretion) if they return her to earth.

Here are some stats for Doc Magenta if she ever recovers.

Doc Magenta

PL: 10

Str: 15 (+2) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 18 (+4)
Int: 22 (+6) **Wis:** 20 (+5) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
Initiative: 4 **Attack Bonus:** 9
Defense: 11 (5 if caught flatfooted)
Toughness Save: 7 (4 if caught flatfooted), **Fortitude Save:** 5
Reflexes Save: 6 **Willpower Save:** 8

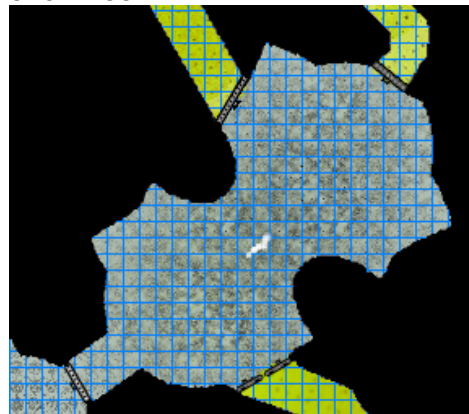
Skills: Concentration 12 (+17), Craft (Chemical) 10 (+16), Craft (Electronics) 10 (+16), Craft (Mechanical) 10 (+16), Disable Device 10 (+16), Knowledge (Arcane Lore)

13 (+19), Knowledge (Earth Sciences) 10 (+16), Knowledge (Life Sciences) 10 (+16), Knowledge (Physical Sciences) 10 (+16), Knowledge (Tactics) 10 (+16), Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) 10 (+16), Notice 12 (+17), Search 12 (+17), Stealth 5 (+9)

Feats: Artificer, Defensive Roll 3, Dodge Focus 6, Inventor, Improvised Tools, Master Plan, Ritualist, Second Chance (Disable Device), Skill Mastery (Craft [Electronics], Craft [Mechanical], Disable Device, Knowledge [Arcane Lore]), Trance, Well-Informed

Powers: Confuse 10 (Flaw: Limited Power [only works against magical beings]), Force Field 10 (Flaw: Limited Power [only works against Magical attacks]), Super-Senses 7 (Cosmic Awareness, Magical Awareness, Detect Magic, Precognition)

Broken Room



The Borderers know to stay away from this chamber. If they are pursuing the PCs, they halt outside the door of the room and will not enter. There is a flaw in space-time running through its center. The light here is dim, but you can see the distortion—it looks like a flaw in a gem, hanging in the air. It's about eight feet long and between three and ten inches across, hovering about four feet above the floor. It radically distorts any light shone into it.

Anyone who touches the flaw will suffer a PL5 attack, and should roll on the following chart for one other weird effect.

- 1) Seized with a sudden attack of vertigo. Suffer a PL10 Nauseate effect.
- 2) Get flung in a random direction (including up) by the equivalent of a Strength of 26. You

can resist this effect normally with your own strength or powers like Immovability.

- 3) Instead of a +5 attack, suffer a +10 attack that ignores any physical, non-magical armor.
- 4) The flaw lets out a hellish screech in tones the human mind can barely even conceive. Everyone in the room takes a PL9 sonic Stun attack from the unthinkable, indescribable sound
- 5) Instead of a +5 attack, suffer a +15 attack that ignores all physical, non-magical armor.
- 6) Teleported to a random room. Suffer a PL Fatigue attack from the disorientation.
- 7) You get sent slightly out of phase with the rest of time. Suffer a PL10 Paralyze (Flaw: Slow) effect. Anyone with the power Time Control can take a round and use their power to negate this effect, with a check vs. DC 10
- 8) Your size gets readjusted, relative to normal reality. For the next ten minutes, you have four levels of Shrinking. All your gear, if any, shrinks with you.
- 9) The flaw lets out a pulse of flesh-warping spatial flux. Everyone in the room suffers a +10 attack that ignores physical, non-magical armor.
- 10) Perceptions scrambled by brief experience of poly-dimensional space. Treat this as a PL 5 Dexterity Drain. You can resist it normally
- 11) Space in the vicinity of the flaw undergoes a brief but radical distortion. Everyone in a 10 foot radius of the flaw suffers a PL 10 Confuse effect.
- 12) The flaw spreads, growing into one of the adjacent squares (select a square at random). Anyone standing in the square must make a Reflexes Save vs. DC 15 or get touched by the flaw, take damage +5 and roll for another Weird Effect.
- 13) You are thrown out of phase with normal reality altogether. For the next 1-20 minutes, you gain two levels of Invisibility (rendering you invisible to all visual senses) and four levels of Insubstantial. You are unable to become visible or touch physical objects until the effect wears off. Anyone with the powers Dimensional Movement, Insubstantial, Teleportation, or Time Control can make a Willpower Save vs. DC 15 to resist this effect.
- 14-20) No additional effect

The Other Broken Room



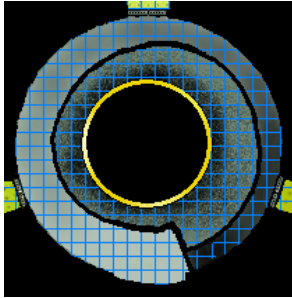
A long, narrow chamber where the lights flicker intermittently. It contains nothing of any value. As you can see from the map, it has two spatial flaws, of the type described in "The Broken Room". These dimensional aberrations function the same way as the one found in the Broken Room. Anybody who touches one suffers a +5 attack and must roll on the Weird Effect chart.

Anyone with senses that can perceive dimensional anomalies, cosmic forces or distortions in the time-flow should be able to tell at once what the flaws are, and that they're dangerous to touch.



The floor in this twisting hallway does not appear to rise. Nonetheless, anyone who walks down it will find themselves on Level 2, (see Page 122, "Access Corridor From Level 1). The corridor itself looks no different from any of the ship's other passageways, although there are some weird alien glyphs inscribed on the wall. Anyone who uses the Power "Comprehend" on them will find that the glyphs read something like *"Persons of Consequence Approach! This way to second level upward/important. All others be sure/clean/attentive in your purpose. Dwelling Persons-of-Consequence Level."*

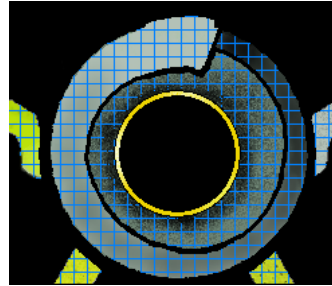
Ramp Room 1



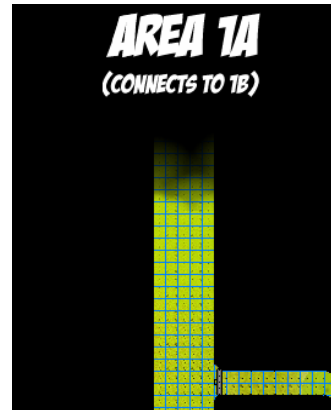
A spiraling ramp leads up through a hole in the floor to the much smaller second level, where the passenger quarters can be found. The same Glyphs as in the “Access Corridor to Level 2” are embossed on the wall. The ramp is steep (45 degree angle), narrow (five feet wide) and has no handrails. It looks as though there is a round black hole in the bottom, and an identical one in the ceiling of the room above, but anyone who falls off the edge will find that they are in no danger of falling through the hole—there is no gravity in the central shaft. Anyone who flies or floats through the hole in the bottom will come out of the hole in the top. Throw an object in the hole with enough force and it would cycle through the well forever (or at least until air friction slowed it to a standstill), were it not for an unpleasant, unexpected feature.

If anyone goes through the hole twenty times in a row, without setting foot on the shaft, there is a $\frac{1}{2}$ chance that on the twenty-first try some extradimensional predator, all claws and tentacles and impossible angles, will come out of the hole with them. The monster should have a PL of 12 or so. It will be intent on grabbing who or whatever passed through its lair one too many times and dragging them back into the hole. Anyone who gets dragged into the hole vanishes utterly (unless a kind GM wants to let the PCs mount a rescue mission in some later adventure—or decides that the monster only grabbed them because it wanted to take them to an other-dimensional tea party)

Ramp Room 2

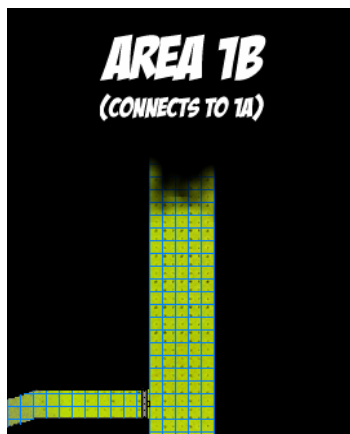


A second room with a curving ramp that leads up to level 2. It is in all other respects identical to the first one, although someone has recently left a pool of vomit a about halfway up the ramp (we have the ever-classy Kaptain Kill-You to thank for this).

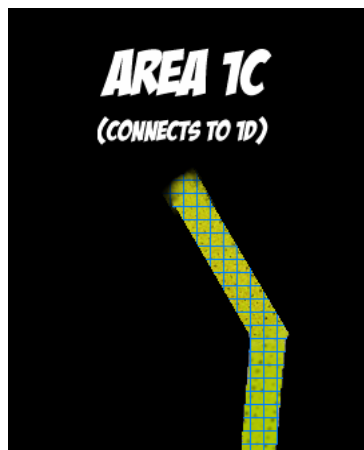


This corridor connects to Area 1B through a warp in space. There is nothing visibly strange about the corridor itself, no visible teleportation effect or portal hanging in the air. The corridor just leads to somewhere that it ought not to. Characters with some kind of absolute ability to sense directions will notice the change in direction and position, but to them it will seem to happen slowly, as though the corridor were very gently curved.

Characters with the ability to sense changes in the space-time continuum can detect that this corridor leads to somewhere it shouldn't normally go, but they will be unable to locate any one specific place in the corridor where it abruptly stops being in one place and becomes part of another, or where it teleports anyone anywhere. The laws of space and time are just different in the White, and the corridor happens to lead to somewhere that according to our own laws, it wouldn't.



This corridor connects to Area 1A, in defiance of all normal logic. See the section under "Area 1A" for an explanation of how this weird, M.C. Escher-like effect actually works. As with Area 1A, the corridor looks deceptively normal. There is nothing to indicate that it leads through a spacewarp and no visible effect when the PCs cross over. In fact, there is no single point in the corridor where they are suddenly shifted over to another part of the ship. The corridor just doesn't lead where it is supposed to.



This hallway connects with Area 1D. See the description under Area 1A to see how this effect it works. The corridor doesn't actually teleport the PCs, nor is there any kind of abrupt transition from one space to another.



This hallway connects with Area 1C, much to the confusion of anyone trying to map out the ship. See the description under Area 1A to see how this effect works.



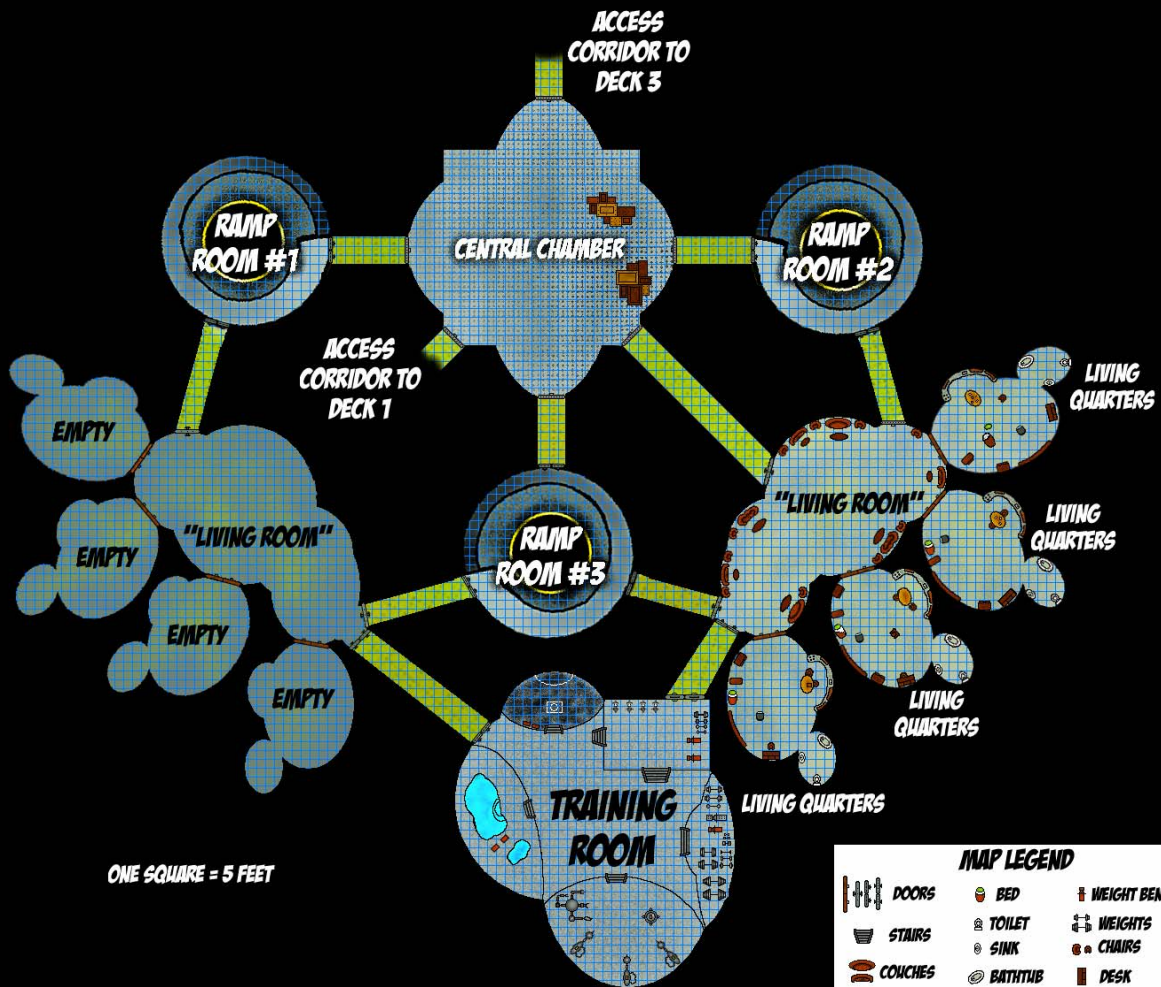
Through some weird trick of other-dimensional space, this hallway connects with area 1-F, changing not only it position, but its direction as you walk along it. As with all the other such places aboard the Paradise Delayed, this effect is slow and subtle, rather than abrupt. In fact there is no single moment at which the hall teleports you to somewhere else. See the description under Area 1A to find out more about how this effect works, in game-terms.



This hallway connects to Area 1E, rather than leading where our sense of logic tells us that it ought to. The specific effects are described above.

Paradise Delayed

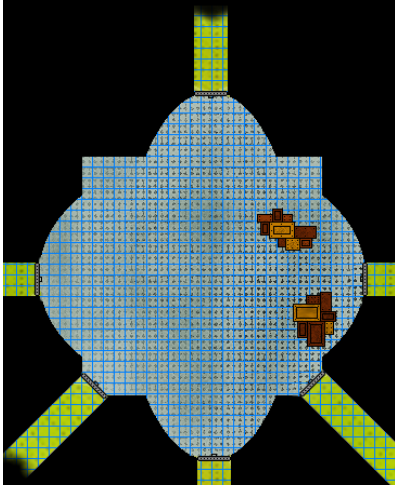
Deck 2



The Second Deck

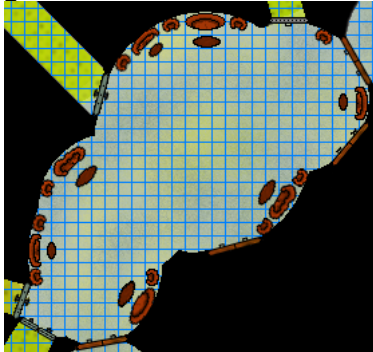
Much smaller than the first deck, this is primarily a residential zone. If the Professor has guests, or if the GM decides that the members of the Ordo Ultima live on board, then this is where you can find them.

Central Chamber



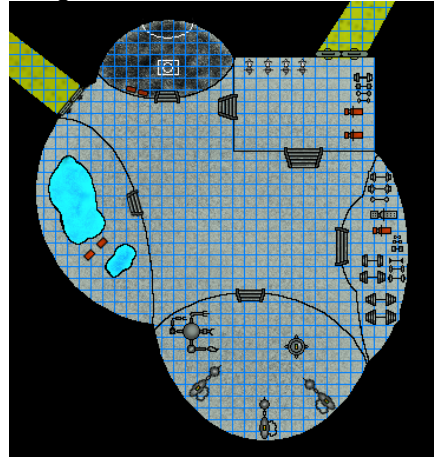
Nearly empty and dimly lit, the Professor uses this room primarily as a storage area. It contains nothing but a couple of piles of crated supplies.

“Living Room”



A large common space that all the personal quarters open into. An oppressively large and fairly sparse room, it has a few pieces of furniture that guests can sprawl on. Most visitors find it too big and full of echoes to get comfortable in, so it sees little use.

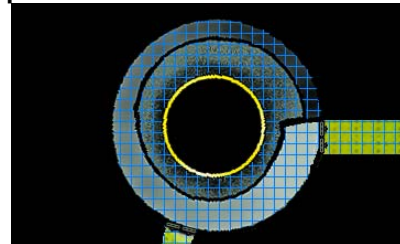
Training Room



It's hard to tell what the original function of this room was, but Professor Purgatory has outfitted it as a training area and gymnasium for his team. There are free weights, exercise bikes, a sort of improvised (and very oddly shaped) racquet-ball court, two swimming pools and an area where team members can fend off non-lethal attacks from robots, to better hone their fighting skills.

The free weights can be picked up and used as weapons, if a real fight breaks out in the training room. The smallest ones will do +1 damage if used as a hand weapon, the biggest ones are meant to be lifted by people with superhuman strength, weigh up to a ton and can do up to +8 damage. If you pick up an exercise bike and clobber someone with it, the bike does +5 damage. Follow the standard rules for danger rooms if someone wants to use the combat simulator as a weapon.

Ramp Room #1



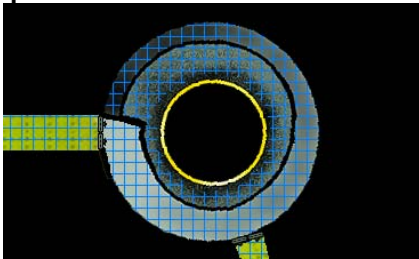
A ramp spirals down to the Ramp Room #1 on the First Deck. There is a large, round, black hole in the floor, and another one in the ceiling.

See the entry under Deck One on Page 118 for details about how this room

works. Through some strange space-distorting trick, the ramp rooms on the second deck are closer together than they are on the deck below, and they are arranged differently—side by side instead of one in front of the other.

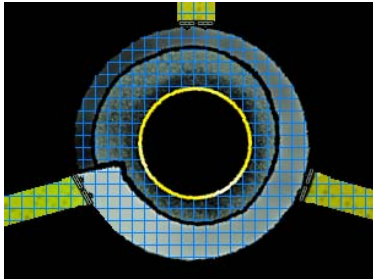
More than one door leads off the ramp onto the second deck and while they are of course all at different levels, if you were to somehow measure the height of the floors of the corridors they lead into, you would find that they are all the same. This is of course impossible, but so are any number of things aboard the *Paradise Delayed*.

Ramp Room 2



Although it isn't located in the same place, this is the same Ramp Room #2 that leads up from Deck One. It works just like all the other ramp rooms (see the description for Ramp Room #1 under Deck One on Page 118).

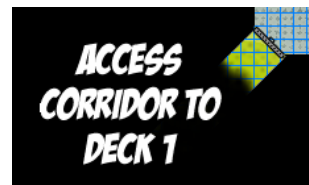
Ramp Room #3



This ramp room leads up to the third deck. It looks the same as the others—a round chamber with a steep ramp spiraling up to the next level, with a bottomless black hole in the floor and another one in the ceiling. There is gravity on the ramp itself, but the whole center of the room is in zero-g. If you use Clairvoyance or some other such power to peer past the featureless, impenetrable, blackness of the hole in the floor, you will see that it leads straight to the hole in the ceiling and vice versa.

See the entry under "Ramp Room #1" on Page 118 for a description of the monster who sometimes appears in this room. When Professor Purgatory gets really bored, he sometimes goes down to this ramp room and hurls some small object through the hole in the floor with his superhuman strength, in hopes of luring out the monster so that he can have a look at it. But for some reason the monster is afraid of him and it's getting used to this trick. If he is present under circumstances that would normally attract the monster's attention, there is only a 1/10 chance that it will appear, rather than the usual 1/2. (this special rule only applies to this particular ramp-room, for the creature isn't used to seeing him in any of the others). Professor Purgatory is the only person or thing that it will never attempt to seize.

The Cretin once saw the monster, and it frightened him so badly that nothing at all will induce him to go back into the room—not even a direct order from the Professor himself. No other member of the Order has this problem. Nor is the Cretin afraid of the other Ramp Rooms. It hasn't occurred to him that there might be monsters lurking in them, as well.



Although the floor remains perfectly level and does not slope at all, this corridor somehow leads down to the first deck. It leads to a less-used area of the ship, remote from the Navigation Room and the Transportation Deck, so both the Professor and the Borderers prefer to use the Ramp Rooms instead.



This corridor leads up to the third deck, although it has no incline and appears to stay level all along its length

Most members of the Order find this effect disorienting and prefer not to use it.

Crew Quarters



If the Ordo Ultima actually live aboard the *Paradise Delayed*, then these are their quarters. All the rooms include a bed, desk, bookshelf, wardrobe, television equipped with DVD player, bathroom, a round wooden table, and a small kitchen area.

It's unclear as to what these rooms were originally used for. The Professor has added the furnishings and fixtures. These rooms are uncomfortably large for most human occupants. The furniture looks lost and scattered across the immense floors and the domed ceilings rise twenty feet overhead.

Most of the team members maintain outside residences on terra firma, as they are only rarely called upon to assemble as an entire unit, but occasionally Professor Purgatory calls together the whole team to one of his lairs, either to prepare them for some grand mission or because the team has suffered reversals at the hands of their foes and need to go to ground. Though they are being included in the description provided for the *Paradise Delayed*, the quarters can be used for any of the other two of the headquarters, Purgatory's Garden or the Depths of Purgatory.

All the rooms include a bed, table, desk, a television/entertainment center equipped with DVD player (which also serves as a video-conferencing screen when the

Professor wishes to summon the team members to upper deck, a bathroom, a closet, a chest of drawers, set of shelves, and a small kitchen area. While they're all the same size and contain the same furnishings, the spaces reflect the unique lifestyles and personalities of their occupants.

The Cretin: The room is messy and unorganized. The bed is always unmade and there are usually candy-bar wrappers on the desk and floor. The room reflects the stunted intellect and child-like mentality of the Cretin, with stuffed animals, wind-up toys, puzzle and children's and young-adult books strewn about the quarters. There is a small extra mini-refrigerator in the room containing various ice-cream treats. An overstuffed bean-bag sits in front of the TV—the Cretin prefers to sit there or on his bed, as the chair is a bit uncomfortable for his ample girth. There is also an additional chair, table, and bed—all scaled down to the size of the Cretin's tiny secondary form.

The Out-Warder: The Out-Warder almost never stays in his quarters even when stationed on the ship for weeks or months—the creature prowls the halls of the ship when awake and “sleeps” in his personal pocket dimension. Except for the times when the Out-Warder leaves some odd item or other in the room that he has yet to incorporate in the “nest” he is building, the room looks as if one lives in it.

The Rage Angels: This is the only two-person dwelling, as Megan and Taylor become highly agitated when separated for extended periods of time. The closet and chest contains a variety of exotic, provocative clothing. There are a few personal effects—newspaper clippings and photos that relate to their former lives—even though the Angels' emotional connections to these items are vague at best. The refrigerator is stocked with raw meat (not human meat) as well as copious amounts of wine and beer, and the pair often partially or wholly inebriated; much of the time they are also engaged in carnal activity of one sort or another (the room is sound-proofed). The Professor is grudgingly tolerant of their

habits, though he forbids any erotic literature or materials. The Angels only dwell here in their human guises; when in their feral forms they are confined to a cage in the Professor's medical laboratory.

Sister Tranquility: Neat and orderly, the room reflects the tranquil nature of the inhabitant. There are several pieces of exercise equipment in the room—a weight bench, dumbbells, a heavy bag and speed bag suspended by chains from the ceiling, and a martial arts practice dummy. The first “Employee of the Month” award she received at the Seattle Star Coffee Shop hangs on the wall. Various workout CDs and DVDs are stacked neatly and categorically on the bottom shelf of the entertainment center.

X'Hort the Converted: Like the Out-Warder's, X'Hort's room is little used, as he prefers dwelling in the warren of his Borderer tribe (he is still a war-chief among his people, after all). All the furniture in the room is specially made to accommodate X'Hort's proportions, and the bed and chair are reinforced to accommodate his weight.

Cryptic Star: Several pieces of expensive-looking furniture adorn this room, in contrast to the merely serviceable furnishings in the others, as the Cryptic Star prefers his own tastes to those of the Professor. The Star's taste in clothing is similarly lavish, with a rack of Armani Suits hanging in the closet. This is the only room besides Sister Splendor's that contains a computer—a high end model with a flat screen monitor. Many of the files on the PC deal with the Paranormal Defense Initiative and their operations. The stacks of books and magazines in the room cover a variety of topics, but especially physics, mathematics, the occult, and libertarian philosophy and political theory.

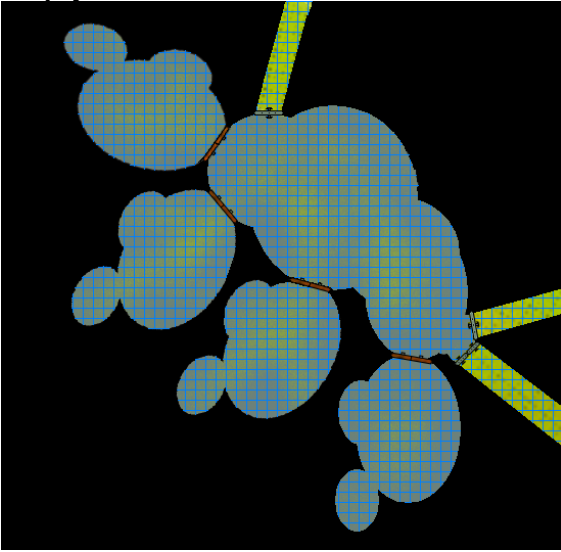
Regiment: Regiment's quarters doubles as a restraining cell; the walls are reinforced to withstand the most rebellious member of the team's enhanced strength, the doors are pneumatically sealed so that he cannot slither through any tiny openings, and even

the air is circulated through the room through micro-filtered grates whose openings are too small for even Regiment's malleable form to pass through. The Sino super-soldier has been allowed a few personal effects, including a futon that he prefers to rest upon instead of the bed, books by Chinese authors (nothing that endorses godless Communism, however), and CDs of folk music traditional to his nation.

Sister Splendor: The Sister spends the most time of any of the Ordo Ultimo members working directly with the Professor, so her quarters are the most “lived-in”, though the room is clean and well-ordered. Like the Cryptic Star, she has replaced the standard furniture with pieces of her own choosing, though her selections are considerably more modest than those of her teammate. The desk and shelves contain many books on mysticism and religion. Several of her spare robes can be found in the closet, along with civilian clothes suitable for a middle-aged woman. A diary containing a record of the Sister's recent activities can also be found in one of the desk drawers.

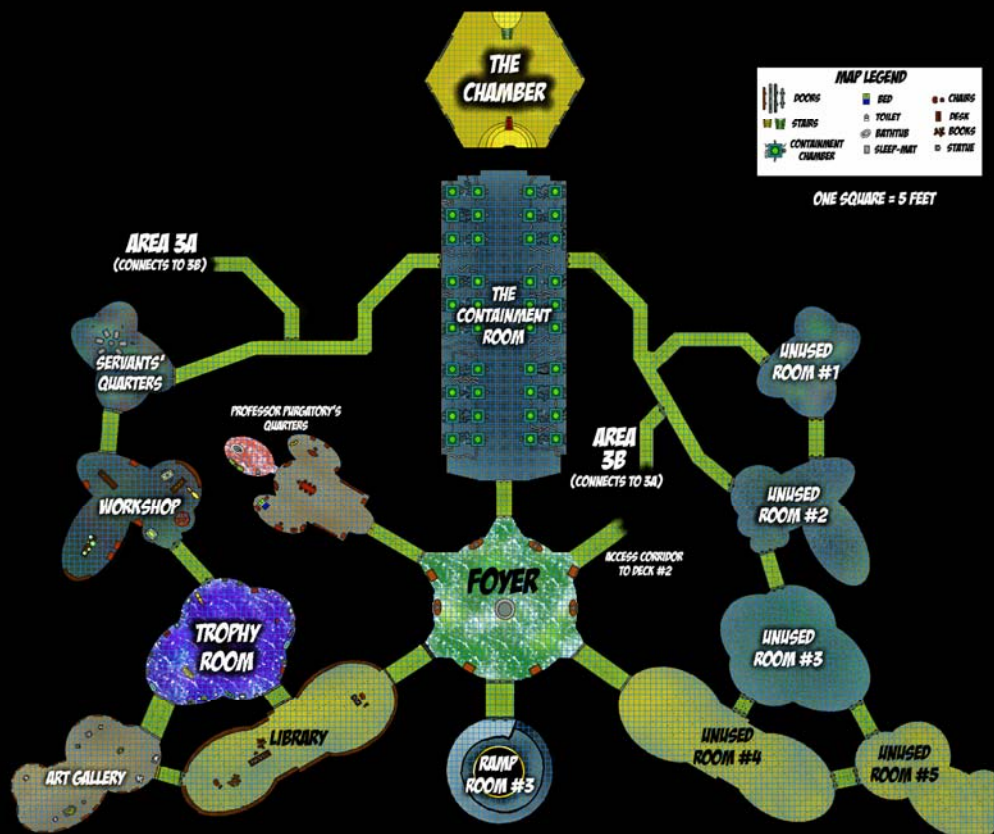
The Penitent: Another room that is little used. There is no bed in this room, as the Penitent cannot comfortably lie down; instead there is a heavy, padded wooden bench supported by concrete blocks for the Penitent to sit upon. Unlike with the Rage Angels, the Professor makes certain there is no alcohol in the Penitent's room, as the armored powerhouse could prove a real problem for the entire team if he became inebriated. The kitchen area is stocked with yogurt, fruit juice, soups, and other liquid foods the Penitent can manage to eat through the armor's face plate. Numerous scented candles sit about the room—when he occupies the room the Penitent lights them all at once, filling the air with an almost-overpowering mixture of odors that even his diminished sense of smell can detect.

Empty Section



Over on the other side of Deck 2 there is another complete set of four rooms with a “Living Room” between them. The unoccupied quarters lie silent, dark and empty most of the time. The professor hasn't bothered to equip them with furniture, doors, or working plumbing.

Paradise Delayed Deck 3

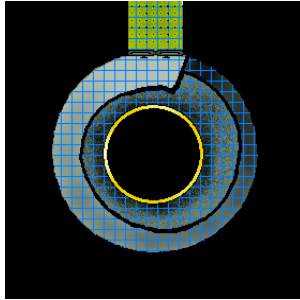


The Third Deck

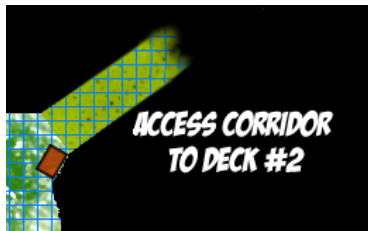
Professor Purgatory's quarters are on the upper deck (of course), and they are as elegant and lavish as one would expect for an individual with the Professor's experience and ego. This level of the ship also houses the Professor's art collection, library, trophy room, personal laboratory, and extra suits of armor.

About fifteen Borderers live up here—the ones who are unlucky enough to have become Professor Purgatory's personal servants. Few other beings have ever seen the rooms where he makes his home and lived to describe them. He never invites his own teammates past the Foyer.

Ramp Room #3

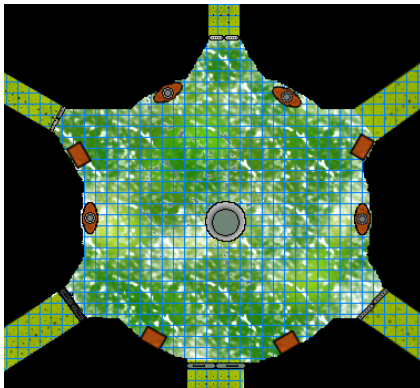


This room connects to the second level. It has already been described on Page 122 (under "Ramp Room #3").



Although it is not built at an incline, this corridor somehow leads down to the Second level. As mentioned above, Professor Purgatory and Kaptain Kill-You are the only ones who regularly use this passage. Kaptain Kill-You never goes up to the third level any other way, for reasons that we explain on Page 122 (under "Ramp Room #3").

Foyer



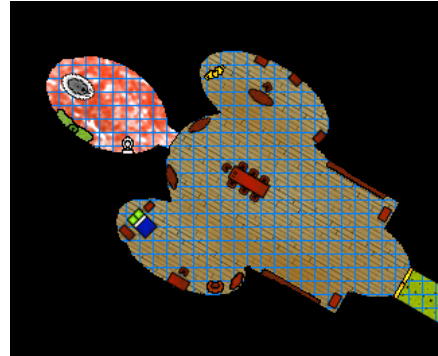
The entrance chamber to the third level. Both the ramp and the access corridor down to level two connect to this room.

Professor Purgatory has somehow managed to install wood paneling around the irregularly shaped wall. Expensive side tables and lamps stand here and there, as well as four huge and utterly incongruous looking grandfather clocks (they all tell

different times). Each side table has a large, expensive urn perched on top of it. They all match the giant urn which rests on a pedestal in the middle of the floor.

There is nowhere to sit down. This is where the Professor holds most of his personal visits with his underlings, and he prefers to keep them brief.

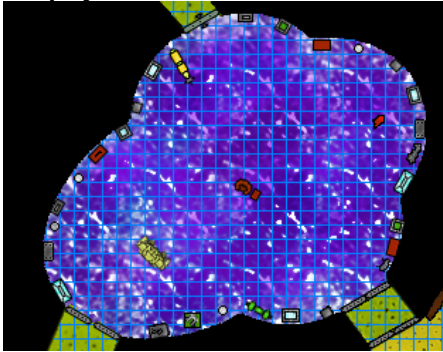
Professor Purgatory's Personal Quarters



The Professor's quarters are sumptuous – fine art hangs on the walls, beautiful sculpture rests upon hand-made furniture, and the enormous bed is fitted with the finest silk sheets. A wall cabinet contains original works of religious literature, occult tomes, and scientific treatises. An empty suit of armor sits in one corner (this suit doesn't actually work; it's an obsolete model and the Professor has long since cannibalized its thaumatological circuitry for some other project). His larder is well stocked with a selection of rare wines and fine teas. The Professor himself is not found here, though a still warm plate of food and a half-empty glass of wine indicate he was recently present.

If the GM thinks it would be appropriate, Professor Purgatory may have kept a journal which explains whatever sinister scheme he is presently working on—it won't say anything about any of his big personal secrets, however.

Trophy Room



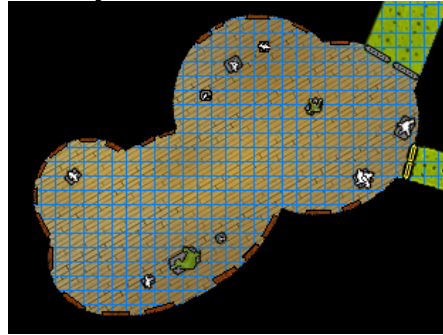
The Professor has acquired a lot of mementos over the course of his career. He displays them in this room, mostly for his own amusement—guests are seldom invited here. A variety of small display cases and pedestal houses the collection.

Some of the objects stored here are trophies taken from fallen enemies, but many of them are far more enigmatic and difficult to interpret. There is for example the cape of a well-known superhero who vanished in the mid 1980s (pick one from your campaign) and the mask of a vigilante who the PCs have encountered before, but haven't seen in a couple of months (here too, pick one). There is also an empty tin of sardines from 1910, with type B bloodstains on the edge of the open lid, as well as the ace of spades from a deck of bicycle cards and the jawbone of a tyrannosaurus rex. Many other items are here as well. A lump of glowing green soil, a broken death ray that looks like a prop from some old movie serial in the 1930s, a buffalo nickel with a bullet hole through the middle of it and anything else the GM might want to include. No functional weapons are stored in this room, apart from a rusty World War One cavalry saber, unless of course the GM decides otherwise.

None of the items have labels. The Professor knows what they signify and if he wants to explain any of it to anyone, he will.

A comfortable chair and a side table sit in the middle of the room. Sometimes Professor Purgatory likes to rest in the chair for hours and quietly gloat.

Art Gallery

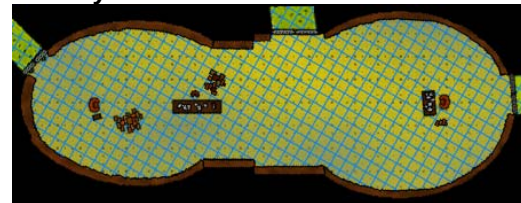


For a religious ascetic, Professor Purgatory's tastes are lavish. This room contains his art collection, acquired by purchase, bullying and theft. There are marble and bronze statues and a number of oil paintings, some of them very large. Many of the pieces in his gallery are religious works by lesser-known old masters. All of them tend toward the gaudy and the over-elaborate. His taste is expensive, but not subtle.

The Professor has no understanding of modern art. Even the Impressionists are too shockingly non-literal for him. He likes Renaissance Italian works, especially those with bloody themes like martyrdom. The pride of his collection is a huge and gory martyrdom of Saint Sebastian by Masaccio—a painting which does not appear in the standard catalogue of that artist's work.

He also has a long-lost painting of the Annunciation by Titian, but even though it's far more valuable he doesn't regard it nearly as highly as his prize Masaccio. Titian just didn't portray physical agony as vividly.

Library



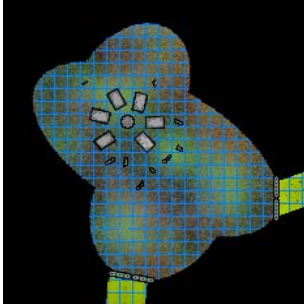
The library is extensive, with an emphasis on the classics, philosophical works, and spiritual texts. A copy of nearly every important occult work written in the last two thousand years can be found here. It's all quite badly organized—the Professor knows exactly where everything is, but he doesn't expect anyone else to ever use it, so he

never bothered to put anything in any particular order.

Heaps of books lie on the floor near the chairs and worktable. They appear to be piled up at random, but if you move even one book the Professor will know that his stack has been disturbed the moment he sees it, without even having to make a Notice roll.

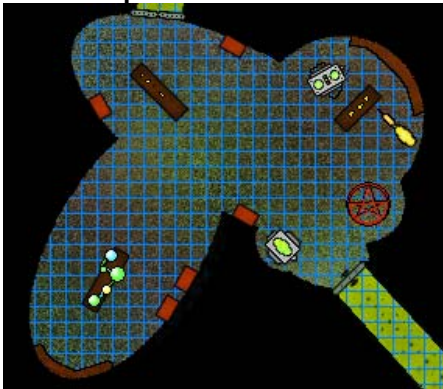
Despite the lack of organization, if a PC Ritualist or other mystic needed to perform some kind of magical research, they could easily do it here. None of the volumes in this library offer any hint as to who or what Professor Purgatory might actually be.

Servants' Quarters



Professor Purgatory's personal staff make their home here. This chamber looks pretty much like any Borderer warren, with a group of family sleeping mats arranged around a central cooking vat. 5-8 female Borderers can be found here at any hour of the day or night.

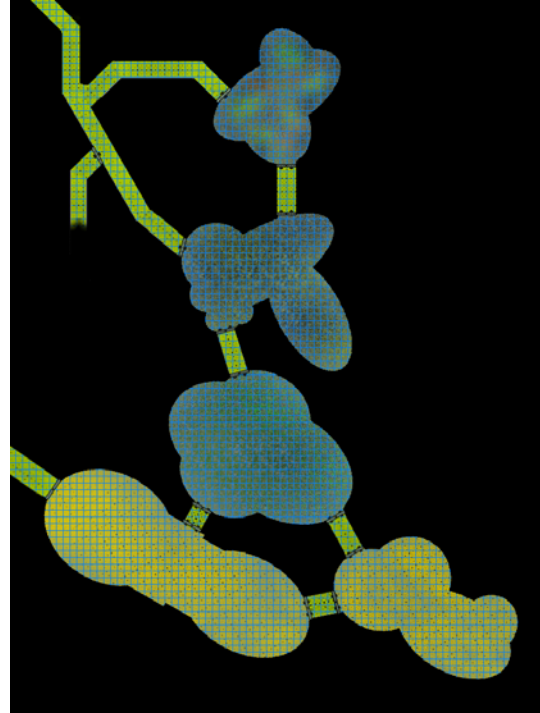
Workshop



The Professor's workshop is an odd mix of the latest scientific/medical technologies with occult materials such as candles, herbs, incense, and arcane scrolls. Several esoteric-looking blueprints detail whatever diabolical machine he is working on at

present. Notebooks describing the results of various experiments are written in English, Cyrillic, and Latin. Pieces of armor are scattered about on tables, half-finished or obviously in the process of being modified in some way.

Unused Rooms 1-5



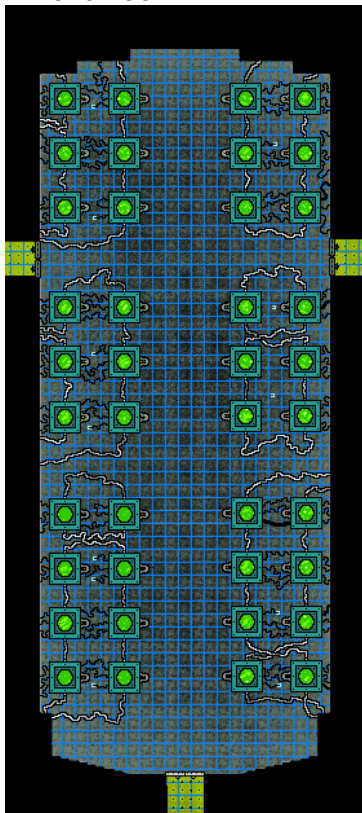
The Professor has not yet found a use for these chambers and they lie vacant and unfurnished. They are not dangerous. No one has walked into any of them in years and none of the more dangerous inhabitants of the Paradise Delayed ever come here. Empty, silent and still they house no tricks, traps or anything else.

Unless of course the GM decides that they could hold some other treasures or fiendish devices. Perhaps Professor Purgatory might even press them into service as additional living quarters, if things got really tight.



Impossibly, these two corridors connect to each other, even though they don't point the right way and aren't in the same vicinity. As mentioned above, this is just part of the weird way space behaves in this dimension.

Containment Room



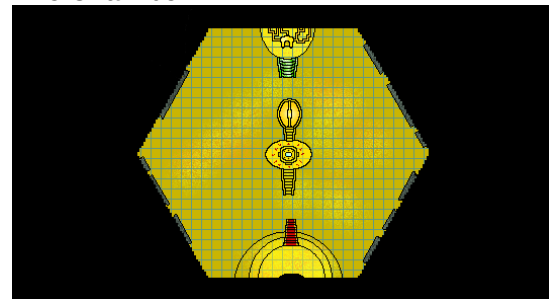
This is where Professor Purgatory stores superhumans whom he wants to keep out of the way. It contains forty cylindrical holding cells full of green fluid. Any parahuman placed inside is subject to a PL 15 Nullify

effect. Although the walls of the containment tubes are transparent, they are still Toughness 15. There is a control unit at the base of each containment tube, but like a lot of Professor Purgatory's machines the controls aren't easy to use. Make a Disable Device Check vs. DC 25 or a Knowledge (Technology) vs. DC 25 *and* a Knowledge (Arcane Lore) vs. DC 20 to deactivate and open a tube. It takes a full round for a tube to empty itself of fluid and open once you have given it the correct instructions.

Each of the containment units is connected to the walls by a snake's nest of hoses and cables—each one is Toughness 5. Disconnect more than four of them to a particular unit and there is a 3/4 chance that you will turn off the Nullify effect. Roll a D20. If the PCs roll higher than a 5 the unit's Nullification effect is disabled. If they roll a 1-5, it isn't but any character trapped inside loses the ability to breathe the fluid. Disconnect another five hoses and roll again!

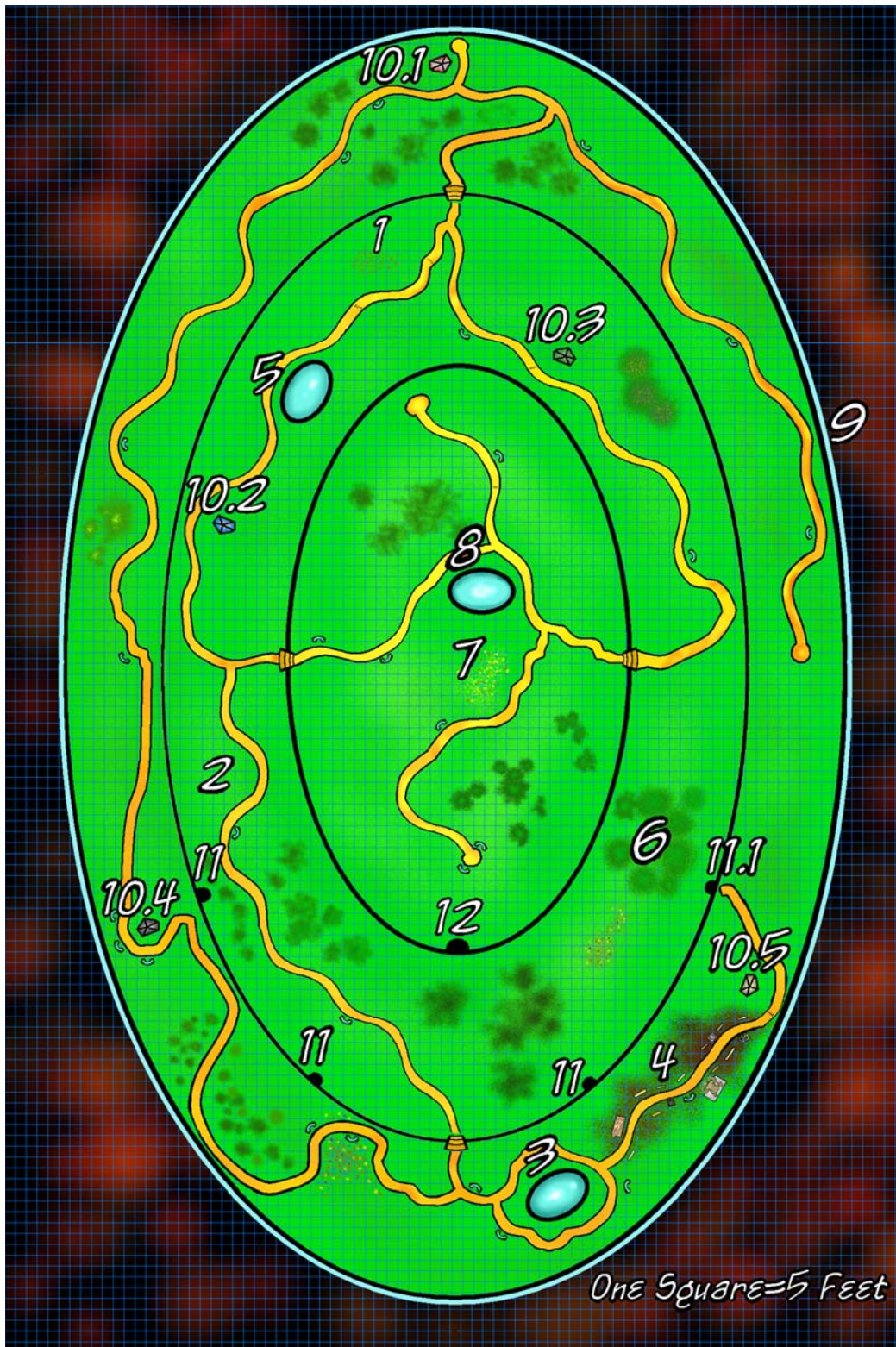
The Containment Room is one of the few areas on the top deck that most of the Professor's henchmen actually get to see—in fact Regiment and the Penitent spend some of their time in tubes when they get especially hard to control.

The Chamber

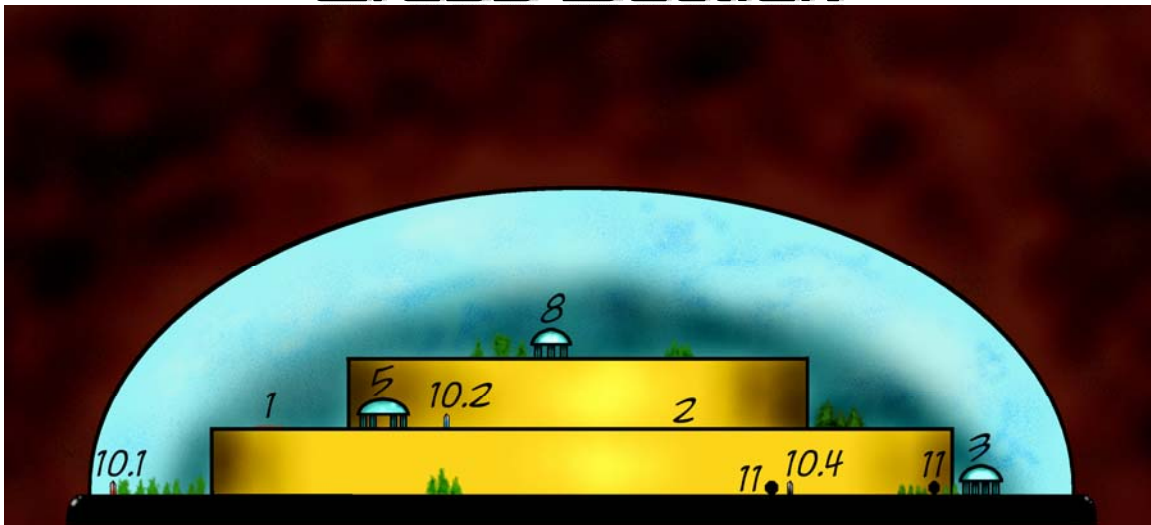


This hexagonal golden chamber is gigantic—140 feet across and seventy feet high. Accessible only when Professor Purgatory intones a specific ritual and makes the door appear (a Free Action), this is where he will keep whatever gigantic evil machine he is presently working on. A set of stairs lead down from the entrance, there is a dais at the other end. Apart from this, the contents of the room change radically with each new scheme of the Professor's. Fill the rest of the room with whatever weird apparatus seems appropriate.

Purgatory's Garden



Cross Section



Guide to the Garden

1: Danger Zone 2: The Troubled Place 3: Gazebo of Purgatory 4: The "Gallery"
5: Gazebo of Splendor 6: Cryptic Star's Spot 7: The Cretin's Spot 8: Empty Gazebo
9: The Other Troubled Place 10.1: Red Obelisk 10.2: Blue Obelisk 10.3: Jade Obelisk
10.4: Chalcedony Obelisk 10.5: Glimmering Obelisk 11: Octagonal Tunnel Entrance
12: Hexagonal Tunnel Entrance

Purgatory's Garden

Toughness: 12 (Base) 8 (Dome)

Size: Colossal (the dome which covers the garden is 570 feet long, 350 feet wide and 175 feet high)

Features: Fire Prevention System, Infirmary, Isolated, Laboratory, Library, Living Space, Powers (Neutralize [Magical summonings] 8, Regeneration 3 [Power Feats: Persistent, Regrowth], Strike 8 [Extra: Aura; anything touching the dome with hostile intentions suffers a PL 8 energy attack], Super-Movement 2 [Dimensional; Extra: Useable on Others]), Power System, Workshop

Overview

In a distant dimension, on a dead world, there is one last garden. Sealed in a fragile glass dome, tended by faithful machines, it is a tiny green oasis in the unending desolation. Professor Purgatory found it by mistake and claimed it for his own. This is now Purgatory's Garden.

He doesn't know much about how the place works, nor does he care. This

little paradise has tended and maintained itself for eons and he is confident that it will for eons more. He is wrong.

The World Outside the Garden

Whatever annihilated the world happened unfathomably long ago. There aren't even any ruins left. You could scour the globe without ever finding anything but the garden and the blasted wastes. Black, oily clouds blot out the sun. They roil and boil and race across the sky. At this latitude you can sometimes see an angry red glow behind the clouds and at noon it grows as bright as twilight. Most of the day it is as bright as a moonlit night. The red light trickles down on the barren emptiness in wavering splotches, the way you see sunlight from deep underwater.

Despite the clouds, it never rains. The land is parched, cracked like the bottom of a dry lake. It's bitterly cold out there, minus sixty degrees at noon, but there are only a few patches of dirty ice. The air is poison. Anyone exposed to it must make a Constitution check vs. DC 25 every round or

die (unless of course they are Immune to poison). That is on top of the Suffocation check they must make for being unable to breathe it, and the effect of the cold. Chemical analysis of the air will reveal it to be a mixture of nitrogen and carbon dioxide, with trace amounts of other chemicals. It's a soup of minute toxic particles—complex hydrocarbons that screw up organic life in a hundred different ways. Any attempt to use the power Adaptation to adjust to the world outside the dome suffers a -2 penalty.

Turn a spectroscope on the clouds and you'll find that they aren't made of water. They are a mixture of dust and complex hydrocarbons like the glop in the air. The wind must be blowing at incredible speed in the upper atmosphere for them to move and change so fast. Sometimes monstrous winds sweep across the wasteland, too, and gigantic dust-devils can sometimes be seen ripping their way through the contaminated murk. None of them have ever managed to harm the Garden.

The stars are never visible, but a PC with some kind of absolute navigational sense can detect that they are in the Southern hemisphere. If this were the Earth we know, they would be somewhere between Australia and New Zealand. It does look something like a dead sea bottom outside. The land is completely flat, covered with a spiderweb of cracks and fissures. A range of weirdly steep, jagged mountains rises to the north of the dome. There is no snow on the barren peaks and even though it never rains, they look badly eroded.

Garden Level

The largest level of the habitat and the only place most guests ever get to see. It is filled with lush vegetation and strange, beautiful flowers. None of them look like any plants of this Earth. A Knowledge (Life Sciences) roll vs. DC 25 will reveal that a lot of the plants look like they came from the Permian Age, just before the age of dinosaurs, but others are completely strange. The flowers, in particular, resemble nothing any human botanist has ever seen.

The garden rises in tiers toward the center. Each tier is about thirty feet high, and can be reached by wide, steep ramps made out of some gold-colored non-conductive metal. There are no stairs anywhere in the garden. The Professor thinks the builders may not have known about stairs, but perhaps they built it to be wheelchair accessible. They also didn't seem to know about guardrails.

The dome soars high above—more than twice the height of the top tier. No one knows why it was built that way or what all the extra space is for.

The material the dome is made from is only Toughness 8, but it regenerates damage like a living thing. It takes six rounds for it to regrow a one-foot diameter hole and a full minute for it to rebuild a ten foot section. Of course, a minute is enough time for a fairly large area inside the dome to get contaminated.

There are no trees, exactly, although some of the flowering shrubs and cycads grow as big as trees. Little paths of golden metal wander through the verdant foliage. Here and there you can find things that might be benches, or pavilions, or some weird alien kind of gazebo. The few objects that the garden's builders have left behind are stylishly designed, sleek and tasteful, but completely inhuman. They don't seem to have liked ornamentation very much—most of their artistry went into design. This of course is completely contrary to Professor Purgatory's esthetic. He likes things to be as lush, elaborate and rococo as possible. Yet it's difficult for him to deny how elegant the Builders' taste was, despite its light, minimalist quality.

No plaques or signs identify the different plants, but in places along the paths you can find what are either letters or decorative marks inscribed on the ground. It never rains, but sometimes a light mist falls from the air like dew. The light comes from tastefully hidden panels in the floor and the dome too seems to glow faintly, illuminating everything more or less evenly. Sometimes music can be heard from some distant point in the garden. It usually sounds like a stringed instrument, but occasionally you can hear some weird reed-

thing like a quavering bassoon or an Australian bullroarer mixed in. Strange and inhuman and infinitely sad, it always fades away when you go looking for it.

Even in the midst of this beauty, death is always present. There is no place in the garden where you can't see the empty wastes outside through the transparent dome. Some kind of thick black clouds have blotted out the sun, leaving the world in perpetual night. Yet no drop of rain ever falls. No living thing moves across the cracked and blackened land, nor does a single blade of grass grow. And if anything were out there, it could see you, too.

A Note About Personal Quarters

Not many members of the Ordo Ultima actually keep private rooms of their own in Purgatory's Garden. Sister Tranquility sits down and rests wherever the impulse strikes her. The Out-Warder does the same. The Rage Angels fly around at whim, and nest in the branches of whichever "tree" looks convenient. Regiment, Cryptic Star and the Cretin, all have their favorite spots, but these locations are all outside, in the garden itself.

The only team members who have anything like actual "rooms" of their own are Professor Purgatory, Sister Splendor and the Penitent. So don't waste time flipping pages trying to find the others.

1: Danger Zone

Markings on the trail near this spot may be intended to warn visitors that there are dangerous plants here. Or they might just be decorative.

A cluster of red flower-like plants grows here. Fleshy and wet looking, they resemble toothless mouths on stalks. Each plant is about six inches tall and a few of them look sick—black flaky spots mar their "petals" here and there. None of them have leaves.

If any living being rests in the vicinity of the plants for more than thirty seconds, they begin to stir, waving slowly on their stems despite the lack of any breeze. Their slow movement is extremely graceful and pleasing to the eye. Too graceful, in fact. A round after the plants

begin to move, they start to sing, a high, fluting, lovely sound that's almost impossible to describe, because it sounds like nothing else. Any biological creature who can hear must resist a PL 9 Mind Control or sit down and listen to the flowers, entranced. They will pay attention to nothing else, and will eventually die of thirst unless they can shake off the effect (or unless they don't need food or water).

There is no good place to keep Regiment (see his description on Page 88) prisoner in the garden, so the Professor (who can resist the flowers' song without much difficulty) usually keeps him here. The giant can normally be found sitting on the ground, staring at the flowers with an expression of something like peace on his distorted features. The Cretin has been warned away from this spot, but sometimes he forgets and has to be rescued.

2: The Troubled Place

The Cretin won't go near this spot. He doesn't like to say why. If he is pressed, he will say that he saw something there. He won't say what it was.

If someone uses Telepathy or Postcognition to find out, they will discover that the Cretin was playing with his toys on the ground, when for no reason he got the odea that somebody was watching him. He looked up, and saw a tall black shape, standing some distance away. It looked a little like a very tall skinny man in a hooded black robe, but in fact it was too black for him to make out any details—just a shape without features. He fled in terror and never even went back for his toys. A stuffed rabbit and a smiling choo-choo train are still lying there on the ground. The Cretin looked back over his shoulder just once as he ran away. The shape was gone, but somehow that just made him even more scared.

No Detection or Awareness powers will reveal anything about what the Cretin saw here, but the shape is visible with Postcognition. It looks just as the Cretin remembers it, although it's only visible for an instant (the postcognitive vision mostly focuses on the Cretin fleeing and only shows the shape at the moment he glimpsed it.

There are no security cameras in Purgatory's Garden and hence no tapes to play back and analyze.

3: Gazebo of Purgatory

It's hard to tell what the function of this small round structure might be. It could be a temple or a picnic spot or something altogether different. It has a roof, six pillars shaped like triangular prisms, and a round white floor. It seems to be made from smooth, heavy white stone, but there are no joins visible between the pillars, ceiling and floor. Could it really have been carved from a single giant block?

Professor Purgatory does not need to sleep and so he doesn't have a room in the usual sense. But this is where he spends most of his time. It's a sort of combination library and living space. His books lie in carefully ordered stacks. Expensive, ornate chairs sit here and there. A rococo end table holds a tea service for when the Professor has guests.

While the books seem to be stacked at random, the Professor actually knows where every last one is and if any of them have been moved he will know it instantly. The books themselves are an amazing collection of esoteric tomes and religious texts. Any Ritualist can make use of this collection as an occult library. There are a few little mechanisms lying around half-constructed and jewelers' tools lie scattered here and there, but this is not his main workshop. For that, see "The Professor's Workshop" on Page 139.

4: The "Gallery"

This is where the Professor displays his art collection. The plants all seem to be dying here. A lot of them have shriveled or developed dry brown spots. Easels and pedestals have been set alongside the path, among the dying plants. They hold the Professor's favorite paintings and statues.

He can't tolerate anything abstract of minimalist. He prefers strict representational art, in rich warm colors, as elaborate and ornate as possible. Renaissance and Baroque are his favorite periods and religious subjects are his favorite themes. Most of all he likes vividly

painted pictures of bloody martyrdoms. The death of Saint Sebastian is his very favorite.

Because the Professor doesn't want any of his precious paintings to get wet, he has turned off the "rain" (more like a heavy mist) in this part of the garden, which is why everything is dying.

5: Gazebo of Splendor

For a crazed psychopath, Sister Splendor is extremely tidy and well organized. She has set up her personal quarters in one of the three "gazebos", up on the middle tier, and to look at her neatly made bed and carefully arranged furniture, you'd never know that she was a rampaging homicidal lunatic.

Sister Splendor doesn't keep any super-weapons, occult artifacts or grisly trophies in her gazebo. Instead there is a wooden bed, a chest of drawers, a wash-basin, a wardrobe and a bible. Her taste in furniture is as stark and drab as a Shaker's. She likes simple lines and unpainted blonde wood— preferably from Ikea.

6: Cryptic Star's Spot

Dr. Cochran (or whoever's body he's wearing this week) likes this part of the garden, shady, secluded and secret. He often stretches out to sleep on the soft, spongy, moss-like ground here, under the overhanging "trees". He keeps his books here, too, in a stack, although he somehow hasn't felt like reading much of anything for months—he's too jumpy, angry and keyed-up all the time (for a more detailed description of Cryptic Star's personality and problems, see Page 70)

7: The Cretin's Spot

A soft place on the ground, with pretty flowers. The Cretin likes it here, and keeps some of his toys here to play with. He doesn't spend much time in the Garden, since he has an apartment in the city (he's Sister Tranquility's roommate) but when he does, this is where he likes to curl up and go to sleep. He has hidden a secret stash of candy bars under a bush, although he sometimes forgets where they are.

8: Empty Gazebo

Another weird structure made from pale stone, identical to the one where Professor Purgatory keeps his things. No one is presently using it for anything. Sister Splendor says you hear the music more often here than anywhere else in the garden, but no one knows if that's true.

9: The Other Troubled Place

The first time a PC ever stands in this spot with an NPC (it doesn't matter which one), the NPC will suddenly turn and look out the dome. If they are concentrating on something, this breaks their concentration. If they are in the middle of combat, they are Distracted and caught flatfooted for the rest of the round.

Depending on the NPC, they might or might not be willing to tell the Player Character that they thought they saw someone standing outside the dome, looking at them. But of course that's impossible, isn't it? They can't describe the thing clearly—they only saw it for an instant. Anyway it was just a shape. A tall, skinny black shape.

10: The Obelisks

You can find these irregularly shaped metal prisms scattered around the garden, here and there. They all have the same odd asymmetrical shape, but each one has a slightly different tint to its shiny grayish surface. For this reason, they are usually called the Red Obelisk, the Blue Obelisk, the Jade Obelisk, the Chalcedony Obelisk and the Glimmering Obelisk. There is no visible door on the outside of any obelisk, but if you want one to open and let you inside, a successful Willpower Save vs. DC 15 makes it happen. A door appears as if from nowhere in whichever side of the obelisk you are facing. The inside of the open doorway looks completely black. You cannot see inside without X-Ray Vision or Dimensional Vision. If more than one person tries to enter one simultaneously from different sides, it forms as many doors as are required.

Each Obelisk is only five feet wide by fifteen feet high, but the inside is somehow much larger—fifteen feet across

with a thirty foot ceiling somewhere in the gloom overhead. In the center of the space is a precise miniature replica of the outside of the obelisk—about five feet high.

Gesture with your hands in front of its surface and you can activate the obelisk's controls.

Each of the five obelisks controls a specific set of the Garden's functions. Why they spilt them up into five different control centers is difficult to understand. It's very hard to figure out how to use the obelisks, but it gets easier with practice. Shapes and patterns of light flicker over the surface of each one as you gesture in front of it, and it gets easier and easier to figure out what they mean with practice. Deciphering an obelisk for the first time takes an Intelligence Check vs. DC 30. Figuring out other obelisks once you've mastered the first one takes an Intelligence Check vs. DC 25 and using one that you've already figured out takes a check vs. a mere DC 15.

Anyone with the powers Comprehend or who can communicate with machines (by any means but Datalink, which is useless here) gets a +4 bonus to each roll.

The professor has mastered all of them, although he hasn't yet fully explored the powers of the Glimmering Obelisk.

10.1 (Red): The Red Obelisk controls the lights and temperature. You can use it to make the dome as cold as 100degrees below zero or as hot as the boiling point of water (212 degrees). Either temperature extreme will kill just about everything in the dome within a few minutes. It takes one round to change the temperature by ten degrees, up or down.

10.2 (Blue): The Blue Obelisk controls the amount and distribution of moisture in the garden. Professor Purgatory used it to keep it from ever raining on his art collection (much to the detriment of the surrounding vegetation!).

10.3 (Jade): The Jade Obelisk controls the music which people can sometimes hear in the Garden, and can also be used to make patters of light appear on the surface of the

dome. These patterns do not resemble the ones on the paths or the ones that appear on the obelisks' controls.

10.4 (Chalcedony): The Chalcedony Obelisk controls the energy field that protects the dome. You can turn it up to PL15 (although this makes the lights inside grow dim and the temperature drops by ten degrees per hour while the field is juiced up to its maximum), turn it down to PL 1 or switch it off entirely. Please note that something awful is waiting out there in the dark for the field to switch off (see the Necro-Wyrm on Page 172).

10.5 (Glimmering): The Glimmering Obelisk controls the configuration of the rooms under the surface of the dome. It makes doorways form and shut and it can be used to adjust the size and shape of the internal chambers. It takes hours of sustained effort to change a room's size and shape. If a wall encounters something solid while it is moving, it will pull back and flow around it instead of pushing it out of the way. This means that you can't use it to crush people or objects inside existing rooms, although you could use it to wall someone up.

The Professor doesn't know it, but there is a secret chamber already hidden inside the structure. Once you have mastered the controls of the Glimmering Obelisk, you could figure this out with an Intelligence Check vs. DC 20. The Professor just doesn't happen to have made the roll yet.

11 and 11.1: Octagonal Tunnels

There are four tunnels leading under the middle tier. All four are twelve feet high and octagonal in cross-section. The interior of each of these tunnels is lit by glowing strips along the wall, which makes it easy to look inside. Although the tiers themselves seem to be made of a gold-colored metal, the walls of the tunnels are made from a glossy reflective black substance that feels just slightly spongy to the touch—almost like plastic.

Three of the tunnels lead to storage areas and the fourth (listed on the map as

"11.1") leads to a small complex of rooms, including a chamber where Professor Purgatory stores the dimensional portal he uses to gain access to our world, and the cell where the Penitent is imprisoned.

The GM should pay careful attention to the layout of the map in front of tunnel 11.1, for this is the first view of the Garden the PCs are likely to have (assuming that they arrived here via the dimensional portal)

12: Hexagonal Tunnel

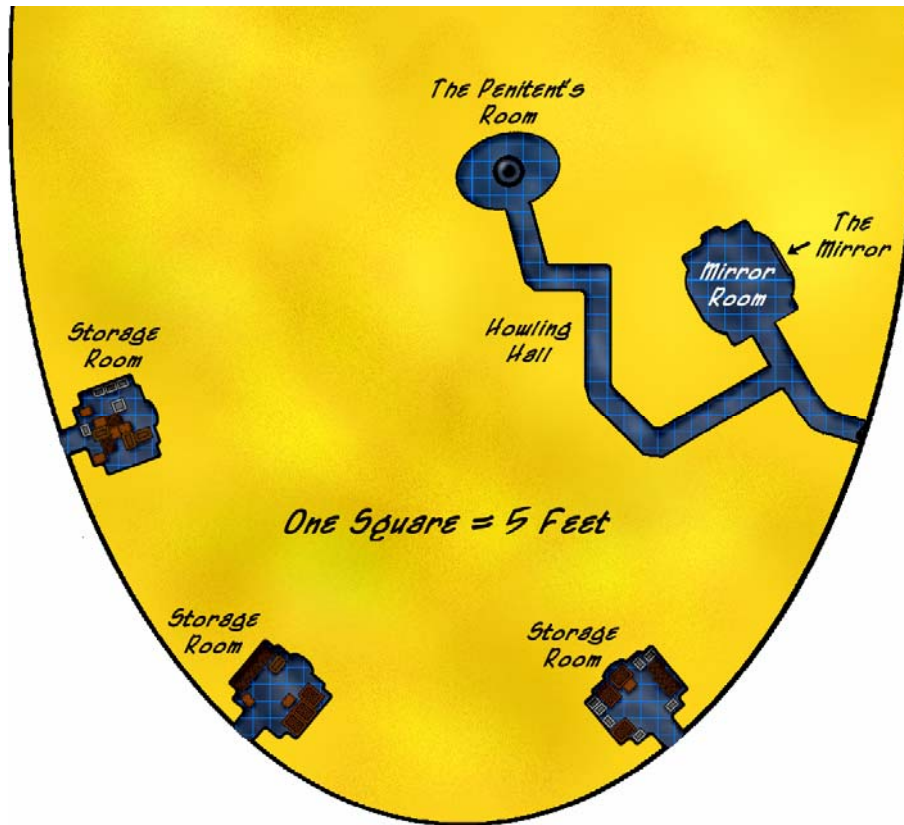
A single tunnel leads under the garden's top tier. Different from all the others, it's fifteen feet high and hexagonal in cross-section. Professor Purgatory keeps his workshop in here. There is no hall or vestibule, the hexagonal doorway opens straight into the room. Anyone standing outside can easily see what is going on in there.

Underneath

There are chambers beneath the surface of the garden. Most of them are under the middle tier, but a few are under the top one.

There are no doors inside the lower chambers, just open doorways. The halls are all Octagonal in cross-section, bulging slightly in the middle. The rooms all have rounded corners. Light comes from softly glowing white strips that run around the lower quarter of each wall. There is no way to turn the lights on or off without using the Red Obelisk (see Page 136 to find out how) but this doesn't bother Professor Purgatory, who does not need to sleep. Walls, floors and ceilings are made of a glossy black substance that looks like Obsidian, but is faintly spongy to the touch, like plastic.

Under the Middle Tier



The Mirror Room

The Professor has constructed a huge black mirror, ten feet wide, that will transport anyone who steps into it to our dimension. The mirror reflects nothing but blackness from this side—you can't see through it.

This is where most visitors arrive.

Apart from the mirror, the room is completely empty. The mirror itself can be used by anyone, no special roll is required. It leads to whatever locations the GM finds convenient to the story. It takes twenty minutes or so for the Professor to change locations.

Howling Hall

Everyone but Professor Purgatory avoids this hall. Long and narrow, it goes around several corners for no obvious reason. In fact the Professor set the hall up that way to help muffle the screams. Sometimes, horrible shrieks of pain and wails of despair echo down the hall for hours on end. The Professor isn't

torturing anyone down there—in fact he rarely ventures down the hall himself. The truth is that this hall leads to the Penitent's room. See his description on Page 83 to see what he's always screaming about.

The Penitent's Room

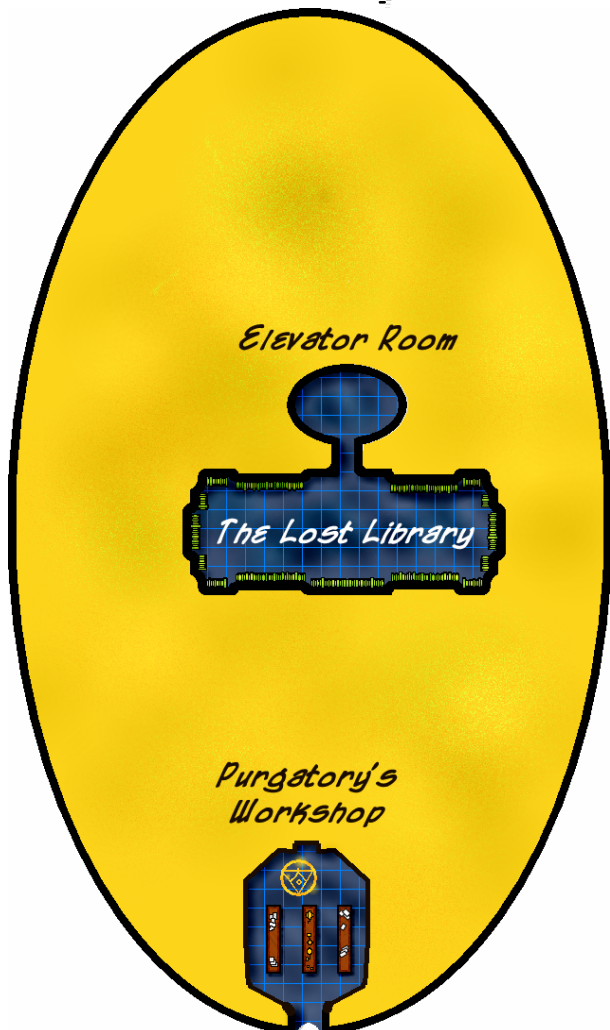
The Penitent is never allowed in the Garden. In fact the Professor seldom lets him in the lair at all. But when he must, he keeps him here. There is a pit in the middle of the floor, with a raised edge, like a well. The rim is about four feet high and made of the same smooth, shiny black substance as the walls and floor. The pit is eight feet wide and about thirty feet deep. Something moans and howls and sobs at the bottom. This is the Penitent (if he's actually in residence—most of the time the room is silent). The Professor keeps him at the bottom of the pit so that he won't go out into the garden. He hasn't earned the

garden yet. He still has a lot of sin that must be burned away. Sometimes, when the Penitent is here in his pit, the Professor will come and talk to him about how wonderful the garden is, how peaceful and tranquil it will be to one day walk down its paths.

Storage

The fruit in the garden is nearly all edible. But the Professor craves finer fare—gourmet viands, expensive wines and so forth. So he has filled these three chambers in the side of the middle tier with supplies. Crates and boxes of every description fill each one. As with the Professor's books, he knows exactly where everything is in the seeming disorder and will know at once if any of it has been tampered with.

Under the Top Tier



The Professor's Workshop

Because he doesn't want his creations to get wet, the Professor has located his main workshop/laboratory indoors, under the top tier. An open hexagonal doorway leads directly into the space. There is no vestibule and anyone can see in from the outside.

There are three big old wooden tables in the middle of the room. Each one is covered with charts, diagrams and half-assembled mechanisms. A big occult design has been traced on the floor, tools lie scattered here and there. A set of his armor sits half-disassembled on one of the tables. It's not ready to use—a PC can't just pick it up and put it on.

The Lost Library

Professor Purgatory has never found this place. Buried under the Top tier, you can only reach it by means of a hidden elevator. The "gazebo" on the top tier is identical to the other two: a white, oval structure with a roof supported by six triangular pillars. If you stand in the middle of the floor and think "I would like to go down" the entire floor will rapidly sink down to the short hallway that leads into the Library. As you descend, you can hear the same strange music that is sometimes audible in the garden, getting louder and louder. The music always plays in the library itself, and it's louder here than anywhere else, although still not loud enough that you would have to raise your voice to be heard over it.

You can detect the Library's presence if you make an Intelligence Check vs. DC 20 while using the Glimmering Obelisk. The Professor hasn't done this yet, but he might at any time.

The purpose of the Library isn't obvious at first. It's a long, low room with shelves lining its walls. Each shelf is full of green metal disks, varying in size. Some are as small as a saucer, a few are as big as a bicycle tire, but most are about the size of a dinner plate. They rest upright on the shelves, with the edge pointing outward like the spine of a book (which is in fact exactly what they are). Each disk is covered with some kind of writing or decorative marking,

different from the marks on the trails in the garden. The script is tiny and closely packed, spiraling inward from the rim to the center. No living being exists who can read that script. However, a character with the power “Comprehend” could do it. The disks can be read from outward in, or inward out.

These are books of nature poetry, by and large. It is very difficult to tell what kind of creature wrote the poems, for they largely focus on beautiful descriptions of sunsets, flowers, the seas breaking on the rocks, trees waving in the breeze, etc. The text means something different if read from inside out than it does if it is read from the outside in, and the art of getting it to do this right was at least half of the game in this school of poetry. If you read extensively through the collection, you will find that the poetic style varies a lot from book to book. There seem to have been many different authors. Even the basic conventions change, as though the books were written over a long period of time.

Buried in among the rhapsodies about the moon shining through the clouds and the wind whispering through the grass, you can find one or two poems that seem to hint at what happened here—how the world came to end and how the garden came to be. There are poems that speak of a being, a ravening incarnation of hunger that dwells outside of space and time. A great leader, a prophet or heretic (or perhaps a philosopher—it’s ambiguous) arrived from some distant place “beyond the veil” and told the people that if they invoked the great beast (who seems to have been something like a dinosaur’s conception of a god, all size and hunger and blind ferocity) they could rule over all the worlds of the multiverse. Many joined his cause. Too many. Things did not end as he promised. The world died. And so there remains just one last garden.

If a character with no psychic powers or magical super-senses reads this account, they suddenly get the feeling that someone is watching them. If they look around, they can see that someone is standing in the hall outside the Library. They can’t see them—the angle is wrong. But their shadow is visible. It’s impossible to make out any details. It’s just a shape, a little like a tall skinny person wearing a cloak or standing under a sheet.

Whatever is casting the shadow steps out of the light and the shadow vanishes. No trace of the thing is ever found. If someone with Postcognition stands in the hall and tries to see what stood there, they get a vision of the shadow, but not the thing that cast it.

Secrets of the Garden

The PCs may never learn all the details—in fact you might find that you prefer to present the garden and its history as totally mysterious. Nevertheless, we do have a back-story for the Garden in case you’d like one. We also have a terrible looming threat that you be able to make use of.

The World of the Garden

The alternate earth on which the Garden exists once teemed with life—vast rain forests which spanned the breadth of continents, ferocious predators whose insatiable appetites kept them on the move for prey for weeks at time, massive sea beasts whose mating cries could be heard half an ocean away, insect swarms that blotted out the sun when they massed in flight, millennium-old trees that supported entire eco-systems among their branches—and a highly-evolved race of reptilian humanoids, a species whose civilization was ancient when their human counterparts in other, far more common parallel dimensions were still striving to master the concepts of fire and the wheel.

The dominant race of this world—a world they dubbed H’raath—called themselves *sss’ha’maans*. They had evolved not from upstart primates but from the far more senior genetic legacy of the mighty dinosaurs. For in the alternate history of H’raath, the asteroid strike that resulted in the mass extinction of the great saurians in other timelines never occurred. The age of the reptiles never ended and mammals never gained an evolutionary foothold, remaining forever at the level of egg-eating vermin. Intelligent, tool-using creatures arose much earlier in the history of H’raath than they did on most of the countless other iterations of Earth that existed across the multiverse; humanity’s elder brethren in this parallel had established sprawling nation-

states while Neanderthals were scratching out crude images on the walls of caves.

While there were early similarities, Sss'ha'maan civilization eventually developed along very different lines than that of humans, their sciences focusing on biological and environmental manipulation, reordering the natural world to suit the whims of the dominant race. None of the race ever evidenced extraordinary abilities, but every member possessed at least rudimentary psychic powers, and the study and development of psionic traits became a high art form. Certain specimens of the race learned to project their minds beyond the material world, traveling to mystic and spiritual realms. Intrigued by the presences they found in these planes, the sss'ha'maans summoned several of these entities from across the gulfs, placing (or perhaps imprisoning) their essences in gene-crafted flesh vessels of immense size; these they deemed their *gods-incarnate*, and they soon learned to tap the divine energies of these biological avatars to create so-called belief-driven technology.

Cults and faiths grew up about these fabricated deities, with zealous and militant followers. These reptilian religions were almost universally intolerant of each other, leading to a seemingly endless series of crusades, pogroms, and wars in the centuries immediately following their establishment.

The two most numerous faiths were those of two diametrically opposed deities, H'aas'arra the Preserver-God, She Whose Step is Heard Across the Lands and S'aaar'ah'man, the Eternal Eater, God of Bloodletting and Conquest. Their respective adherents fought each other across the centuries, employing an ever-escalating array of biological, psychic, and faith-based weaponry. The adherents of the Preserver-God eventually rose to dominance across the globe, but S'aaar'ah'man's armies remained a cancer upon the planet. The worst of these was the Voracious Legion, led by the crazed priestess M'aal'iss'ha the Vomitous.

Perhaps the devastation that brought about the end of history on H'raath was the culmination of the endless, ever-escalating conflict between the Voracious Legion of the Eternal Eater and the rest of civilization, when

some doomsday weapon was unleashed; maybe the incarnated gods finally slipped their cages of flesh and ran amok across the world, annihilating the beings that once both worshipped and enslaved them; or possibly the end was brought about by entirely natural forces, some astronomical event that wreaked havoc on a scale even beyond that of the killer asteroid that the Sss'ha'maans' ancestors once escaped. All that is certain is that only the Garden remains...or so it seems.

The Reptile Queen and the Voracious Legion

Something bad is coming.

M'aal'iss'ha, high priestess and slut-bride of the eternal eater, has been prodded back to a mockery of life by the presence of Professor Purgatory and the Ordo Ultimo. Her Voracious Legion rises with her, ready to rip, ravage and ruin all that lives. Creaking in their armor and their eons-dead flesh, the horde that once slew the world is marching on its last garden.

S'aaar'ah'man's shattered remnants have begun to coalesce and take on form once again, sensing that the occult technology Purgatory has begun assembling in the Last Garden holds the potential to carry his followers to other dimensions, worlds where there is still fear to be spread, flesh to be devoured. This must occur if S'aaar'ah'man is to survive. Even a god cannot exist forever as a mere vestige haunting a dead planet, whose last followers lie mummified deep in the catacombs of the world. S'aaar'ah'man must again have active adherents—those who worship him because to do otherwise is to be devoured.

To this end, the spirit of the Eternal Eater will spur M'aal'iss'ha and her undead warrior-legions onward across the ruined husk of H'raath, trekking toward the Garden. M'aal'iss'ha has been sent visions of Professor Purgatory and his minions in the Order, dark insights into their strengths, weaknesses, and behaviors; she knows the powers they command, but plans on bringing them down nonetheless, scheming to overcome through the sheer numbers of her legionnaires and by using the deadly environment of the world outside the

Domed Garden against them. And then she has still more sinister plans. She has been granted knowledge of the Professor's home of Earth, and already rejoices in the possibility of slaughtering its inhabitants in the name of her god.

The Voracious Legion are single-minded in their devotion to their matriarch and her god-given mission, as they lack any purpose but to serve the will of S'aar'ah'man. Too, the existence of the Garden is an affront to them, a symbol of hope and perseverance amidst devastation. This is blasphemy to the servitors of the Eternal Eater, whose presence signals the end of hope. They are driven to destroy the sanctity of the Garden and then carry their blood-soaked banner to new worlds, to further pillage, enslave, devour, and destroy.

Phantoms of the World Before

As the Voracious Legion marches toward the garden from the far side of the world, other forces begin to stir. The ghosts of the garden's builders rise to mourn its impending loss. That's what the Cretin saw in the "troubled spot" (see page 134). That's who was standing outside the dome at the "other

troubled spot" (see page 134). That's who stood and watched as the PCs found the lost library (if they did—see pages 139-140).

These hapless, gentle phantoms have no power to protect their garden. Nor is that why they are here. They just want to see the garden one last time before it ceases to be and the world dies completely. It does not occur to them that either the Ordo Ultima or the Player Characters might be able to stand against the Voracious Legion, so they won't try to enlist their aid. They might or might not try to warn them. The Professor and Sister Splendor make them uneasy, but they like the Cretin. Unfortunately, their one attempt to speak to him ended very badly, so they won't try again.

Would they try to tell the PCs what is going on? That depends on how long the PCs are in the Garden and on who they are. But it mostly depends on whether it would help the GM advance the plot. Both the ghosts and the Voracious Legion are meant as optional plot devices for the GM to employ if need be. You don't have to make use of either of them.

THE DEPTHS OF PURGATORY

Soviet Science City VI

Toughness: 10

Size: Colossal

Features: Communications, Concealed, Defense System (not working in much of the complex, there are still some areas where erratically programmed lasers with an Attack Bonus of 6 will sometimes fire on intruders, or non-intruders, or nothing at all, doing between 0 and 5 Damage, depending on the condition of the laser, and some of the doors to high-security areas will give off a PL 3-8 electric shock to anyone who fails to use the skill "Disable Device" to open them—although sometimes the mechanism fails), Fire Prevention System, Garage, Hanger, Isolated, Laboratory, Library, Living Quarters, Power System, Security System (which sometimes works and sometimes does not, at the GM's whim), Workshop

Overview

Professor Purgatory has set up shop in a Soviet Science City which has lain abandoned for thirty years in a remote corner of frozen Siberia. The Soviets built a lot of these secret underground research facilities during the Cold War, to test weapons that were far too dangerous ever to use near civilian population centers.

Soviet Science City Six was devoted to overcoming the West's superiority in superhuman assets by summoning some terrible Elder God back into the world and putting the thing under Soviet control. Not surprisingly, the experiment went awry, killing nearly everyone inside the facility; no extra-dimensional monster-god showed up, but the barrier between dimensions was weakened, and something undeniably

slipped through. (See Pages 165 and 171 for the horrifying details).

Built during the 1960s, this secret underground base had been deserted for decades when Professor Purgatory found it. He has only partly refurbished it. Most of the complex is dark, silent, dirty and cold. He hasn't even bothered to clean the corpses out of Control Room Five (see Page 162).

When presenting Soviet Science City Six to your players, give them a sense of how gloomy, cold, dismal and harsh it is. Everything is made of crumbling, stained concrete and rusting steel. Exposed pipes and conduits run along the walls. Water drips from the cracks in the ceiling. The overhead lights flicker and hum. Everything is stark, ugly, bare. Even the Professor's lair looks like a hastily-assembled base-camp.

All Levels

Soviet Science City VI is five levels deep. Some features are common to all five levels.

Corridors

All corridors are between twelve and fifteen feet high, with Toughness 10 walls. Floors and walls are made of concrete, sometimes reinforced by rusting metal plates.

There are places where the concrete has become badly cracked. At the GM's option, the Toughness of the walls here may be 8 or less.

Elevators

The complex's designers made no distinction between freight and passenger elevators. There are just big elevators and larger ones. All of them have bare steel floors and walls. Each one has a bulky security camera pointing down into the cab and some of the cameras still work. A tiny window lets you see the interior of the elevator shaft.

Instead of pressing buttons for the various floors, you pull a big, heavy lever to make the elevator move up or down, and turn it off when you have reached the floor you want (it takes a Dexterity Check vs. DC 10 to line the floor of the elevator up with the floor outside—roll a critical failure and you've missed your floor altogether).

Elevators are marked on the map with a yellow letter **E**

Doors

Most of the rooms at Soviet Science City Six have riveted steel sliding double doors. The doors are Toughness 8, and can be forced open with a Strength Check vs. Dc 35. Doors are normally opened with a bulky numeric keypad on the right of the doorframe. However, most of them are not locked with a code and hitting the "Enter" button is usually enough to make them open. Doors can be locked from Control Room One (this takes a Computers Check vs. DC 15, or DC 25 if you don't read Russian) or by pressing the "lock" button on a door keypad, punching in whatever seven

digit password you want to set and then pressing "Enter". It takes a Move action to open a door, whether or not it is locked (it takes a moment for the hydraulics to engage and slide the doors apart) Hacking a locked door requires a full round and a Disable Device Check vs. DC 25. Anyone caught in a slamming door suffers three damage and may be trapped between the doors at the GM's option. This can easily kill an ordinary human being.

Some of the sliding doors have jammed. They are more difficult to force open than doors that are merely shut. It requires a Strength Check vs. DC 40 to open a jammed door. And of course getting it open doesn't fix any failed hydraulics or rusted out bearings in the door. Unless the GM decides otherwise, assume that a broken door which has been forced open stays open until someone pushes it shut again.

Central Atrium

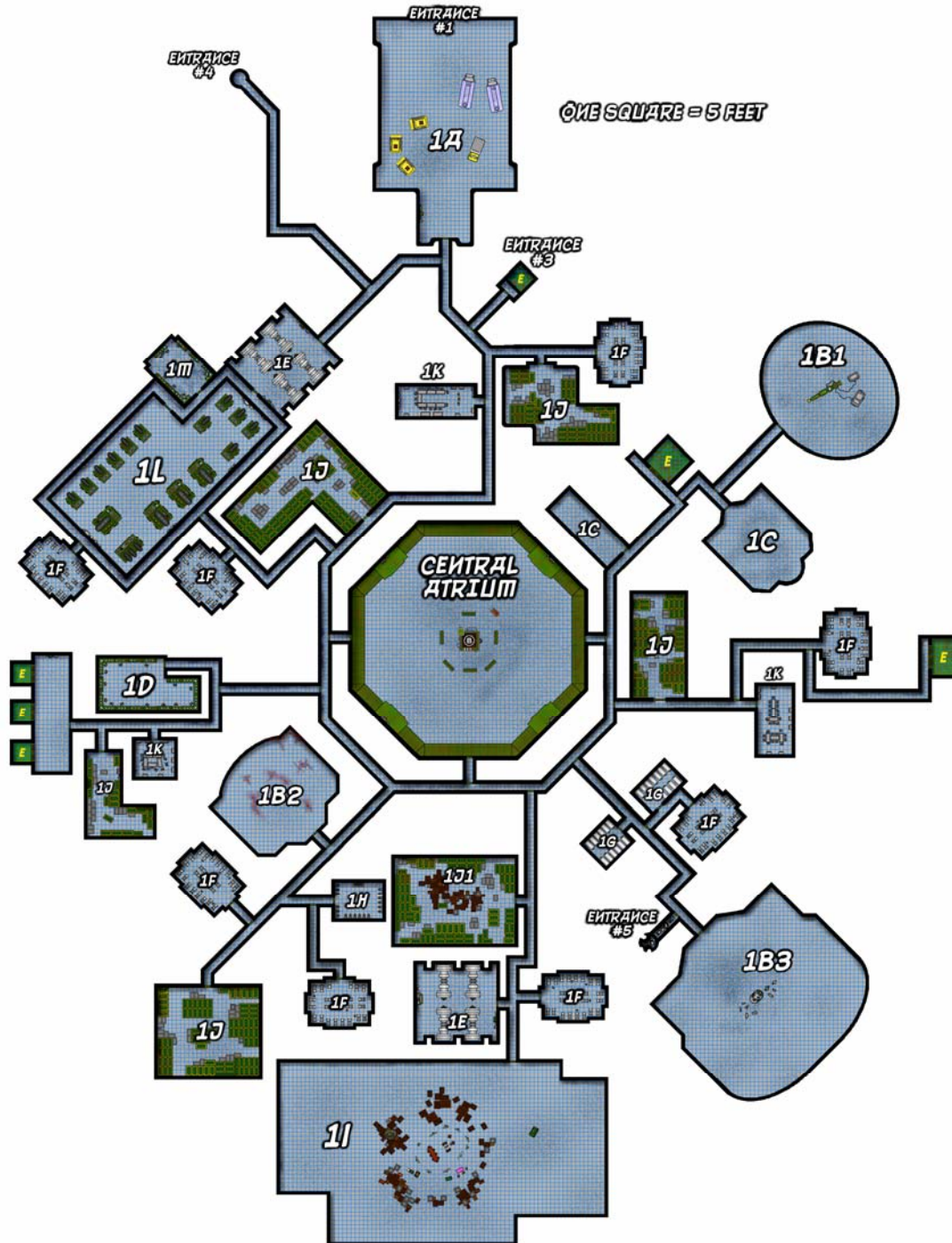
All of the compound's main corridors open onto this immense central space. Rusting iron balconies run along the sides of each level and elevators run up the walls. It takes a Strength Check vs. DC 30 to rip one of the Balconies off the wall and send it tumbling. How much damage it does when it lands depends on the height it falls from, but it should be considerable—PL 8 or 9.

The roof irises open like a giant camera lens, to allow helicopters to land on the helipad at the bottom. The pad is empty at the moment, but it still works. The fuel tanks on the pad are empty at the moment, but can hold hundreds of gallons of aviation gas. Maintenance equipment rests on racks nearby, in working order.

There is a forklift nearby as well, and while it doesn't have any fuel in its tanks, it is still functional. The forklift weighs 1 ton and does 7 damage if somebody picks it up and uses it as a bludgeon.

SQVIET SCIENCE CITY VI

LEVEL ONE



1A: Vehicular Storage, 1B (1-3): Test Chambers, 1C: Empty, 1D: Control Room 1, 1E: Backup Generators, 1F: Living Module, 1G: Officer's Quarters, 1H: Restroom, 1I: Purgatory's Lair, 1J: Storage, 1J1: Storage Room Ten, 1K: Conference Room, 1L: Air Pump Room, 1M: Control Room Two

Level 1

All the entrances in the complex lead to the first level. It contains a mixture of test-chambers, storage areas and living quarters, all silent and dead now, except for the giant room where Professor Purgatory and the Ordo Ultima have made their encampment.

Entrance 1

A huge steel door is built into the hillside here. It's more than thirty feet wide and opens horizontally. Toughness 12, the door can only be opened from the inside. It takes a Notice Check vs. DC 20 to spot the hidden seam, overgrown as it is. However, after it has been opened once, there is a visible tear in the ground that anyone can see, without having to make a roll, even when it's closed.

Entrance 2

There is an immense depression in the ground here, more than sixty feet wide. From the air you can see that it is perfectly circular. At ground level it becomes clear that the ground over the depression has weird, symmetrical spiral cracks in it. This is because the whole thing is a gigantic concealed door, which can open up like the iris of a camera lens. Underneath is the complex's Central Atrium, leading a hundred and forty feet straight down to the bottom of its six levels. There's a helipad down there—the function of this door was to let helicopters make secret landings inside the atrium.

The door itself is made of a special alloy the Soviets developed in the mid sixties. It's Toughness 12 and does not normally open from the outside. It can be opened in five rounds from the Security Control Center (in three rounds the aperture is wide enough that a helicopter could slip through with a (pilot Check vs. DC 20).

On the top tier of the central Atrium there are manual emergency controls that can be used to open the door in ten rounds (in five rounds it's wide enough for a desperate pilot to risk the DC 20 check) with a Disable Device or Craft (Electronics) check vs. DC 15.

Entrance 3

A small concrete blockhouse rests incongruously in the middle of the tundra. It's about seven feet high and twelve feet wide, chunky, ugly and unadorned. The stained, pitted walls have been specially reinforced and are Toughness 12. An unmarked green metal door (Toughness 10) leads inside. There are no markings on the blockhouse or the door, no indication as to what its function might be.

This entrance used to be concealed in a thicket of scrubby bushes, but the camouflage has long since worn away, leaving it naked and bare.

The door is of course locked. There is no handle or electronic keypad visible from the outside. However, a Notice Check vs. DC 20 will reveal a niche in the overhanging concrete rim that juts out past the door. It's just about large enough to stick a finger in. Anyone who inserts an object or a digit in the hole triggers a long-dormant mechanism, and a concealed keypad pops open on the door. The buttons are unmarked, and it takes a Computer or Disable Device roll vs. DC 25 to get the door open.

Inside is an elevator shaft, which goes down about fifty feet to the top of the elevator cab (which is Toughness 10, but has an unlocked trap door). Flip the big green metal lever just inside the door and you can raise the elevator to the surface.

The door has a handle on the inside and can be opened easily without a key or any kind of special code.

Entrance 4

Intended as an emergency exit, this is a round concrete shaft with a ladder running up the wall. Fifty feet high, it leads from level one to the surface. It's only five feet across and it's a pretty claustrophobic climb.

The rungs of the ladder are fixed directly into the wall. Each one is Toughness 8 and can support about 500 pounds. At the GM's option, some of them may be loose, and may support as little as a hundred pounds—considerably less than the weight of an average PC. It takes a Strength Check vs. DC 30 to pull one out of the wall, unless of course it's one of the

loose one, in which case the DC may be as low as 15. A rung does 3 damage if it's ripped out and used as a club.

The top of the shaft is covered with a round trapdoor (made of a lightweight but very strong metal, it's Toughness 8), concealed by a patch of fake turf. In the years since it was built, real turf has grown up around it, so it no longer opens easily—a Strength Check vs. DC 15 is required to open it from either above or below. It takes a Notice Check vs. DC 25 to spot the hidden entrance from above. Because this is supposed to be an emergency exit, the door does not have a lock.

Entrance 5

This was supposed to be another emergency exit, identical to Entrance #4, but it has partly collapsed and is hopelessly choked with dirt and rubble. The door still opens, although it's difficult—roll a Strength Check vs. DC 20. Underneath the tunnel goes down about ten feet before it gets totally impassable.

1A

Vehicular Storage

The floor of this huge garage slopes up at the north end toward a huge steel door (Toughness 12) that rests at a 45 degree angle, and opens up horizontally. It's concealed from the outside, and the tundra has grown up over it, but once it has been opened, there is an obvious gash in the ground, even after it has been closed again. It takes five rounds for this giant trapdoor to open fully, and three for it to open wide enough for a vehicle to squeeze out. There is of course no safety mechanism on the door and getting pinched in it while it closes does 10 damage.

There are marked parking spaces for more than thirty vehicles, but only five are present—an old Soviet military transport truck, two empty fuel trucks and three snow-cats on treads. Unless the Professor Purgatory has found a good reason to keep some of these vehicles gassed-up, none of them contain any fuel. The trucks are covered with big canvas tarps. All of the vehicles are still in working order, although the transport truck will take a Dexterity

Check vs. DC 15 and two rounds of effort to start up.

1B (1-3)

Test Chambers

Weapons-testing was a major function of the Soviet Science Cities. Like all of these giant underground facilities, this one had a number of test-chambers, ranging in size from large to immense. Some are as large as aircraft hangers.

Because of the nature of the experiments performed here, not very many of them were ever used. Most of the research being performed in City #6 took place in Test Chamber IX. The rest sit largely empty and silent. A half-dismantled jet engine sits abandoned in #1B3.

Chamber #1B1 holds the rusting remains of a death ray that didn't work. #1B2 has some intriguing bloodstains across a large part of the floor.

The walls of these chambers are particularly well-reinforced. Each one has Toughness 15 walls, floors and ceilings.

1C

Empty Rooms

Some of the rooms at Soviet Science City Six lie empty and abandoned. There wasn't time to evacuate before the disaster which killed everyone and other parts of the complex seem cluttered and overcrowded. Why were these rooms left vacant? No easy answer presents itself. The empty rooms vary in size. Most have concrete floors thickly covered in grime and dust. A few have vaguely suggestive marks on the floor here and there, as though they might have once held some kind of machinery.

1D

Control Room 1

This is the Security Control Center. From here you can monitor any of the (working) security cameras in or outside the complex, and activate any of the remaining defense systems. You can lock or open any of the blast doors from here as well (except for the ones on Test Chamber IX), although that's a more difficult task and requires a Computers Skill Check vs. DC 20 (these controls are protected by passwords). You

can use these controls to open the door to the Vehicular Storage area, or the giant hatch at the top of the Main Atrium, as well (Computers Skill Check vs. DC 15). Anyone who doesn't understand Russian or have the power "Comprehend" will roll to use the controls at a -4 penalty.

The only rooms that have no cameras at all are the Political Officer's Office, the Political Re-Education Center behind it and Test Chamber IX. Whether or not any of the cameras is working at any given moment is up to the GM.

Professor Purgatory normally has at least one of his minions stationed in this room, watching the dim, flickering screens.

1E Backup Generator Rooms

Six huge generators sit in each of these rooms. The base has a small nuclear power plant buried underneath it, but in case the reactor ever had to be shut down there were three sets of emergency backup generators, each of which could meet about 60% of the complex's power needs. There are two of these rooms on Level 1 and another one on Level 5.

The generators were built to last decades and they've never been switched on. If you were to drain and replace the oil from each of them, there is as much as a 2/3 chance that the generator would still work, despite all the years of neglect. Unfortunately, there isn't any fuel for them.

Each generator weighs twenty tons and is Toughness 10. If a super-strong character were to hit somebody with a generator, it would do 8 damage.

1F

Living Modules

Each of these gloomy, grimy barracks was built to house a dozen soldiers or technicians. Each holds rows of triple-decker bunk beds and a toilet. Life here cannot have been comfortable. There are only a few personal effects lying around on the neatly made bunks. A watch here, a miniature chess set there. No one seems to have kept a diary. A thin layer of dirt and debris from the deteriorating ceiling covers everything on the upper bunks.

1G

Officers' Quarters

Accommodations for the officers and scientific staff were only slightly less Spartan. The individual units resemble Japanese "coffin hotels". Each is a padded tube about eight feet long and just high enough to sit up in. There is a bookshelf along one wall, a telephone (which only connects to the rest of the base) and a video screen which used to display official announcements and Soviet television.

Most of these "rooms" still contain the original resident's personal effects. There are books on advanced mathematics and occult lore, letters from loved ones, false teeth, spare eyeglasses and whatever other pathetic relics the GM feel should be left behind. They were discouraged from keeping personal journals, but at the GM's option one or more of them may have defied this directive and written some notes describing the awful things that were done here and the grand project which eventually claimed the lives of everyone who worked at Soviet Science City Six.

Each tube is Toughness 7, weighs two tons and is firmly bolted to the floor. It takes a Strength Check vs. DC 28 to uproot one of them, in addition to the check required to lift it. If a super-strong character were to use one as a weapon, it would do 8 Damage. The hatches are Toughness 8 and take a Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 to open if they are locked (they only lock from the inside, so none of them are locked at present). If you were to rip a hatch cover loose and use it like a club, it would do 5 Damage.

1H

Restrooms

As unappealing as you would expect from a soviet-era lavatory, these rooms each contain a few exposed toilets (with no stalls) and a long basin that serves as a collective urinal. The fixtures are made of cold, rusty metal and the toilets don't have seats. Some work, some don't.

There are no separate facilities for female visitors. Soviet society was deeply sexist, despite its official claims to the contrary, and no one ever anticipated that women might ever be in the complex.

1I

Professor Purgatory's Encampment

The Professor has set up shop here, in the middle of an enormous disused test-chamber. His priceless, ornate furniture rests on the concrete floor, surrounded by some of his favorite works of art. There are no walls close enough to hang his paintings, so he has them displayed on easels. The Professor does not need to sleep, so he hasn't brought a bed. Near his personal belongings is a gigantic stack of crates and boxes. These are his supplies. They are a deeply impractical assortment of gear. Fine wines, elegant tablecloths, silver dinnerware, gourmet food, additional items of expensive furniture and so forth. He has not brought anything remotely useful to exploring a ruined facility in Siberia—for example, a climbing rope or cold weather gear. Then again, he doesn't need anything like that himself. Why use a rope when you can fly?

The other members of the Ordo Ultima don't like Soviet Science City Six (except for Sister Tranquility, who likes it neither better nor worse than anywhere). Most of them huddle close to the Professor for protection. Sister Splendor has an army cot and a big trunk full of personal possessions nearby, the Cretin has an air mattress and a box or two of toys. Sister Tranquility has a meditation mat to rest on, the Rage Angels have a nest of dirty blankets on top of some crates and even the paranoid and solitary Cryptic Star bunks in the same room (although he sleeps in a tent, apart from the others).

The only two members of the team who don't live in this room are Regiment and the Penitent, who the Professor keeps in the Detention Center, locked in two of the pits (see Page 157).

1J

Storage

It took a lot of supplies to run a base like Soviet Science City Six, and these rooms are where they kept them. Huge crates of rations, spare parts, ammunition and even raw pig iron lie stacked in orderly rows, all in varying states of decay. Whether or not any

of these supplies are still useable is entirely up to the GM.

A typical crate is Toughness 4.

Some crates weigh as little as 50 pounds and do as little as 2 damage if picked up and used to clobber someone with. The biggest crates weigh up to 1,500 pounds and do 6 damage if used as bludgeoning weapons.

1J1**Storage Room #10**

Professor Purgatory has mixed his own supplies in with the crates in Storage Room 10. His crates are newer and much less well organized. They contain fine wines, expensive antique furniture and a number of religious paintings that he hasn't gotten around to unpacking yet (as we mentioned the section on his art gallery in the Paradise delayed, the Professor like scenes of bloody martyrdom—particularly Saint Sebastian). The Professor's crates tend to be smaller and lighter than the ones the Soviets left. None are much heavier than 500 pounds or do more than 5 damage if flung around.

1K**Conference Rooms**

These dismal windowless rooms were used by both the administrative and the scientific staff to hold meetings. Some are big and some are small. Each one holds one or more tables and a few chairs.

1L**Air Pump Room**

Giant air pumps take up most of this enormous room. There is also a crane that hangs from a set of tracks across the ceiling, to help lift spare parts into place whenever the pumps need maintenance. The Soviets built these machines to last. The pumps have been chugging away in the dark for decades.

Each of the giant pumps weighs fifty tons and is Toughness 10. In addition to

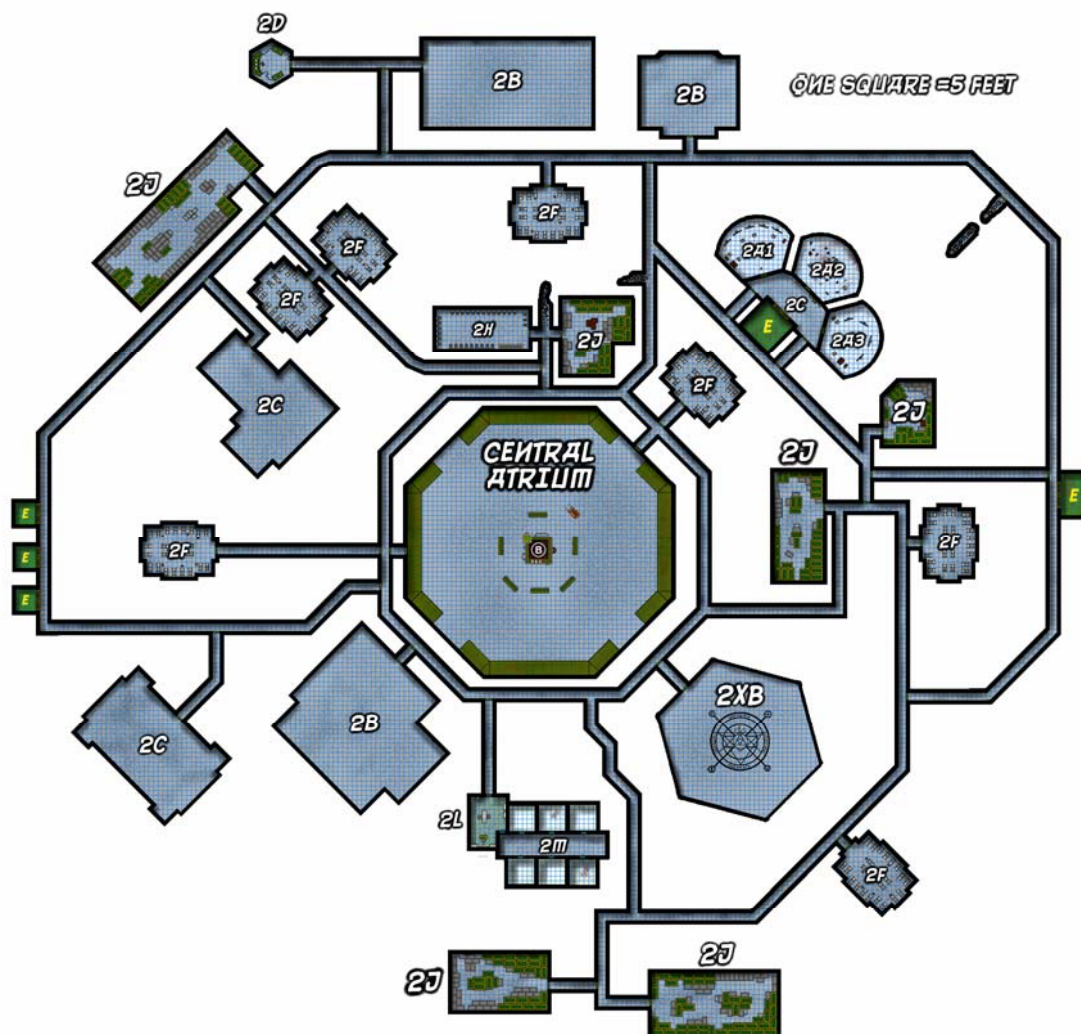
their massive weight, each one is securely anchored to the floor—make a Strength Check vs. DC 28 to rip one loose. If you are strong enough to pick one up and clobber somebody with it, the pump does 10 damage. If more than three air pumps are disabled, the complex will run out of breathable air in a week or so. Individual rooms may become uninhabitable much faster (depending on their size) if you leave the door shut.

The room is full of noise from the machinery. Any Auditory-based Notice rolls you make in here suffer –2 penalty. The boiler burns heating oil and it is presently unlit. There are some oil drums nearby—enough to run the heater for a week or so.

1M**Control Room 2**

This small control room is used to run and monitor the apparatus in the Air Pump room. There are screens that can be used to monitor the security cameras in the air pump room and just outside the control room door. It takes a Knowledge (Technology) check vs. DC 15 or a Computers Check vs. DC 20 to figure out how to use the controls. There is a –4 penalty if you can't read Russian. The controls themselves look very low-tech 1960s—all analog dials and toggle switches and big metal wheels that you turn with both hands.

LEVEL 2



2A: Math Labs 2B: Test Chambers, 2C: Empty Rooms, 2D: Control Room 4, 2F: Living Module, 2H: Restroom, 2J: Storage, 2K: Conference Rooms, 2L Political Officer's Office, 2M: Political Re-Education Center, 2XB: Test Chamber Six

2A (1-3)

Math Labs

Each of these stark grey rooms contains a few chairs, a computer terminal, a table and three or four large chalkboards. Because these are Soviet-era labs, each one also has an abacus.

The chalkboards in Mathematics Lab One have been wiped clean and Lab Two is a shambles of broken furniture with ancient bloodstains spattered all over the walls, but

the work that was going on in Mathematics Laboratory Three has been left undisturbed. Three of the chalkboards are covered with complex topographical equations and what look like occult symbols. After a certain point the writing and diagrams on the boards get much shakier and more disorganized, as though whoever was composing them had suffered some kind of terrible nervous shock.

The fourth and largest board contains diagrams and formulae that few people on earth would be able to follow. The handwriting is more badly deteriorated here than on the other boards. Some of the final entries appear to have been smeared on in blood. A huge, intricate diagram covers the center of the board (it looks like a more complicated version of the diagram on the floor of Test Chamber IX). The design is almost impossible to follow with the human eye. The chalk lines look almost three-dimensional, they seem to cross over one another at impossible angles. Look at it for more than a few seconds and it leaves an oddly vivid afterimage on your vision for a minute or so. People who spend much time in the room sometimes get the eerie feeling that the chalk lines are moving whenever they aren't looking at them. This is where the Soviet researchers had their breakthrough. The secret to breaching the walls of reality is on that board.

Here and there Professor Purgatory has added annotations and corrections in red chalk. He has crossed out a few equations, corrected others and modified some of the lines on the central diagram.

This math lab is the main reason that the Professor has set up shop here. He might eventually take an interest in summoning up the Delirium (see page 171) and using it to destroy the world, but for the moment he is mostly concerned with deciphering the secrets to be found in Math Lab #3. He's already learned a great deal. These chalkboards are as good as any grimoire ever scribbled by any mad wizard—and they're much better organized.

2B

Test Chambers

Just as on the floor above, a lot of Level Two was given over to massive chambers intended for various types of weapon tests. They come in various shapes and sizes. Some are as big as aircraft hangers. Others are very peculiar shapes—it's hard to see what kind of tests some of them could have been built for. Apart from Test Chamber 6 (See 2XB on Page 153), none of them seem to have ever been put to use.

2D

Control Room 4

A small hexagonal room, outfitted with monitors and sensors, intended to observe the experiments that were to have taken place in the long rectangular test chamber at the other end of the hall. No tests were ever actually performed there, but with a Disable Device or Computers Check vs. DC 20 (DC 15 if you can read Russian) you can observe the test chamber in visible light, radar, Magnetic Resonance Imaging, Infrared, X-Rays and any of a dozen other spectra. You can also check on the chamber's temperature and humidity.

With a Disable Device or Computers Check vs. DC 25 (20 if you know Russian) you can turn off the cameras in the Test Chamber, which also renders it blind to Control Room One.

2F

Living Modules

Dank, cold and wretched, the men here slept in triple-decker bunk beds and may have had to do it in shifts, like the crew on a submarine. They haven't left much in the way of personal possessions. No weapons or diaries or anything else remotely useful has survived.

With this many beds they must have generated an awful lot of laundry, but no laundry room can be found anywhere in the complex. Yet the Living Modules don't stink of unwashed linen. They don't smell like much of anything, in fact, except for wet concrete and rust. Perhaps their Laundromat was in one of the rooms that collapsed.

2H

Restroom

Another vast bathroom with facilities of dubious cleanliness and nowhere to wash your hands. The lighting is poor in this one, so there are lots of dim corners and ambiguous shadows to go with all the disturbing echoes.

2J

Storage

These rooms are filled with more crates of supplies. They might or might not still be useable at the GM's discretion.

Most of the crates stored here are made of riveted metal (Toughness 4). Some weigh as little as 50 pounds and do 2 damage if picked up and used as weapons. The biggest crates weigh up to 1,500 pounds and do 6 damage.

2L

Political Officer's Room

It was difficult to maintain ideological purity at a site dedicated to investigating the occult. Proper Socialist thinking can start to fray when you are constantly immersed in mind-bending forbidden blasphemies. To help prevent Revisionism and Deviationism in this difficult environment, the Party assigned one of their most feared Political Officers, Iorgi Zukanov to Soviet Science City Six. His authority was absolute—even the facility's commanding officer had to bow to him on matters of correct thought. So firm was his commitment to the Socialist cause, that when the accident happened in Test Chamber IX and everyone went insane, he was the only one able to resist it. Indeed, by focusing on the teachings of Lenin and Marx, repeating Socialist dogma over and over with all his strength, he was able to withstand the onslaught for nearly fifteen seconds (more than any human being exposed to the Delirium has ever managed, before or since), just long enough to shoot himself.

The room contains a long metal table with a few uncomfortable chairs, a bright light to shine in the eyes of Comrades whose loyalties have become suspect, some filing cabinets, and a row of books on a shelf. The floor is tiled for easy cleaning and a gutter with drains runs around the edge. A human tooth still rest in one of the drains. A steel desk (Toughness 7, it weighs 500 pounds) is bolted to the floor at the back of the room. Behind it, in a rusty office chair, are the remains of Iorgi Zukanov. The contents of his head are spattered all over an enormous portrait of Lenin. Oddly, when one considers his terrifying reputation, he was a little man.

Zukanov actually had time to scribble a few last notes with a pencil before he shot himself. Whether these are just party slogans, frantically copied out over

and over, or whether he actually wrote something the PCs could find useful is up to the GM.

PCs who use Postgcognition in this room can experience Iorgi's final moments in all their hideous glory. The gun actually jammed once and he had to clear it before he was able to put a bullet through his malfunctioning brain. The last thought that went through his head, just as his will started to collapse, was "the walls want your blood."

2M

Political Re-Education Center

These are the rooms where Iorgi Zukanov used to break men to the Will of the People. A short corridor leads between six small cells, each with no furniture and perfectly white walls. There are no instruments of torture here. Seldom did Iorgi bother with any tools but his hands and his personality. It was a point of pride.

There are windows in each steel door (the doors are Toughness 10 and require a Disable Device Check vs., DC 20 to unlock without the keys in Iorgi's desk, the reinforced windows are Toughness 8) and you can see that two of the cells are occupied. Both occupants are long dead. Neither one has risen. One of them has a number 2 pencil, which he has used to write "there is no such thing as Soviet Science City Six" across the wall of his cell, hundreds and hundreds of times.

2XB

Test Chamber 6

Some very unpleasant experiments in trans-dimensional parapsychology were conducted in this little concrete chamber. This was where they conducted the initial tests that were then attempted on a grand scale in Test Chamber #9.

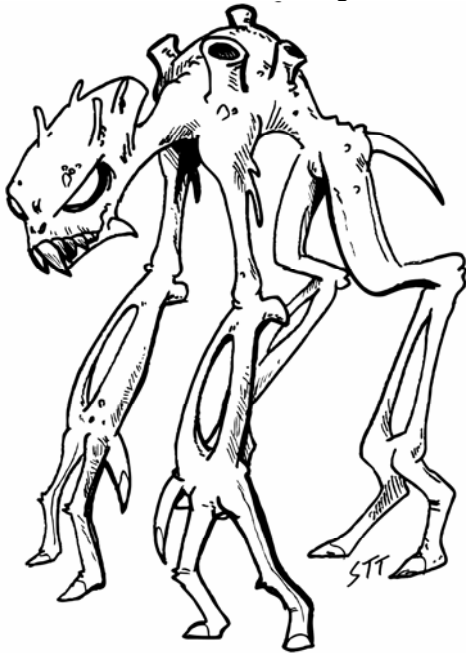
About the size of a squash court, with a bare cement ceiling that loom thirty feet overhead, the room is dominated by the large circular diagram that spreads across its floor. You can recognize it as an elaborate summoning circle with an Arcane Lore check vs. DC 15. Carefully measured out in chalk, this maze of lines and symbols seems to pulse if you stare at it too long. The lines

seem almost three-dimensional, and cross over one another in impossible ways, like an optical illusion or an Escher drawing.

For some reason it is always ten degrees colder in here than in the rest of the complex. If you spend more than a minute alone in the room, you will start to hear faint, dry, sounds like whispering. Are these air currents? Are they voices? Even if you have ultra-hearing or some other auditory super-sense, it's not quite possible to make out what the sound is. If you try hard to listen (or make a Concentrate check) the sound goes away. It also vanishes if anyone else walks into the room.

The large summoning circle is still active. Someone with the feat "Ritualist" can use it to call extradimensional entities into our world. Sometimes horrible things use it to summon themselves, and slip out into the complex. In fact, here's one now.

A Horrible Thing



PL: 8

Str: 20 (+5) Dex: 16 (+3) Con: 26 (+8)
Int: 13 (+1) Wis: 16 (+3) Cha: 14 (+2)
Initiative: 3 Attack Bonus: 8 Defense: 8
Toughness Save: 8 (4 Impervious)
Fortitude Save: 8 Reflexes Save: 5
Willpower Save: 6

Feats: Improved Grapple, Move-By Action

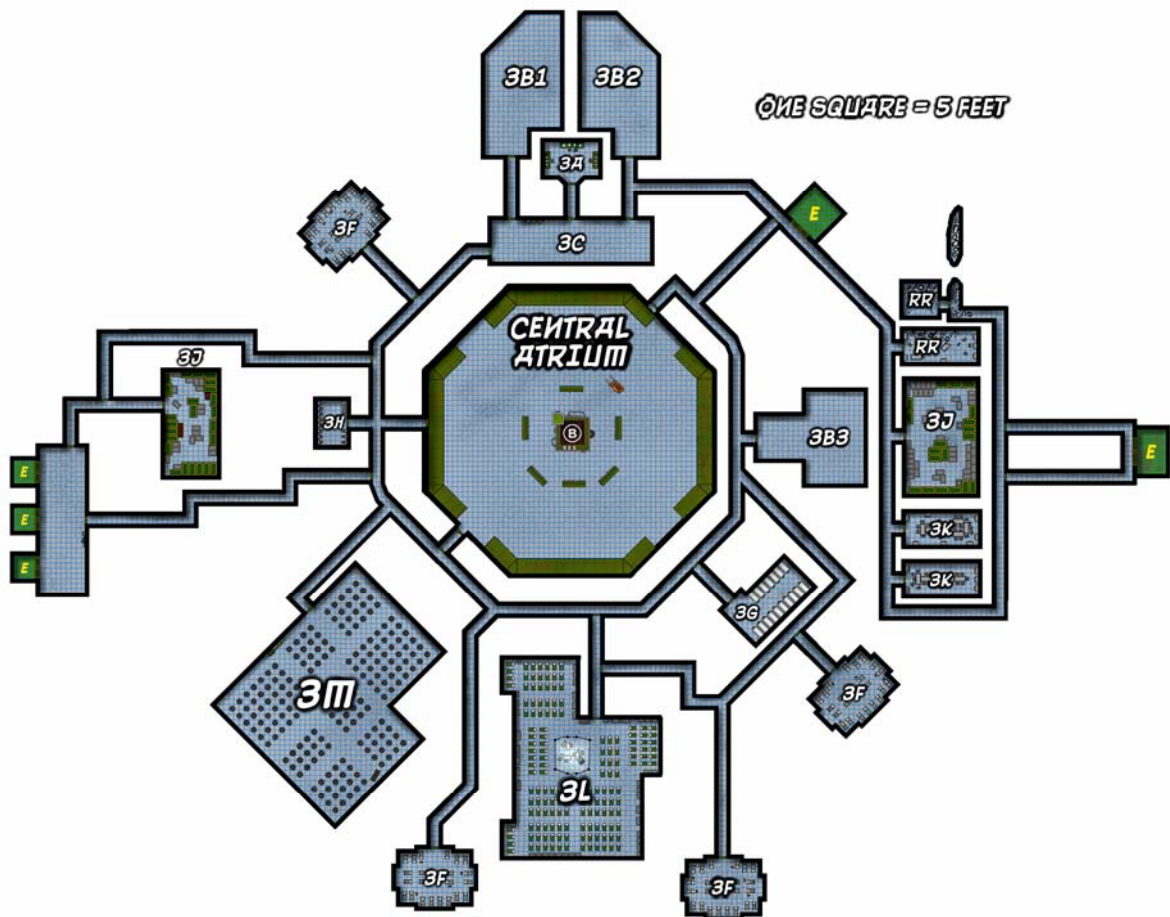
Powers: Flight 2 (maximum Speed: 25 mph), Immunity (Illusions, Invisibility, Pressure, Suffocation), Impervious Toughness 4, Super-Movement 3 (Permeate), Super-Senses 6 (Darkvision, X-Ray Vision), Super-Strength 4 (Maximum Lift: 6 Tons)

Complications: Enraged by the sound of children laughing, mutilates all its victims in the same methodically obscene way.

Drawbacks: Hideous (Common, Moderate)

Background: There may or may not be any horrible things wandering around the complex at the time the PCs arrive. This is just a sample of the kind of unwelcome extradimensional visitor who may have decided to pay a call. Others will have other stats and abilities. They won't be minions of the Delirium (see Page 171) and they probably won't know anything about its aims—they're just opportunistic monstrosities who happened to stop by to borrow a cup of blood and souls once they saw the door was open.

LEVEL 3



3A: Control Room Six, **3B (1-3):** Test Chambers, **3C:** Empty, **3D:** Control Room 3, **3F:** Living Module, **3G:** Officer's Quarters, **3H:** Restroom, **3J:** Storage, **3K:** Conference Rooms, **3L:** Infirmary, **3M:** Detention Center **RR:** Rubble-Filled Rooms

Note: This may be the closest thing there is to a safe place to hide in Soviet Science City Six. No experiments were ever performed in any of the test chambers on this level and there isn't anything else here that Professor Purgatory thinks is worth investigating here, so he never comes down here. Because there is so little activity here, and the Professor doesn't take much of an interest in it, the team-members he assigns to monitor the cameras in Control Room One tend to skip over it. If you wanted to stay out of the Ordo Ultima's view, this is the right place to do it. And none of the rooms are infested with the Longing Dead, either.

3A

Control Room 6

A small, square control room, intended to monitor the experiments that were to have taken place in test chambers one and two. Neither one was ever used, so this room never saw active service. The equipment still works.

With a Disable Device or Computers Check vs. DC 20 (DC 15 if you can read Russian) anyone can use the gear to view test chambers one and two, as well as to measure the temperature, radiation level, electromagnetic flux and so forth in either

chamber. Not that there's much point, because there's nothing in either one.

With a Disable Device or Computers Check vs. DC 25 (DC 20 if you can read Russian) you can disable all the cameras and other monitoring devices in either chamber. This also keeps the team members in Control Room One from being able to see them, and because they don't pay much attention to level three, it might be quite some time before they notice. Possibly days or even weeks.

3B (1-3)

Test Chambers

None of the chambers on Level Three were ever put to use. The two largest, (Chambers 3B1 and 3B2 on the map) are oddly-shaped mirror images of each other, and were apparently deemed important enough to have their own control room assigned to them (see 3A above). But whatever test they had planned for them never took place.

3C

Empty Room

This may have been some kind of security station. There are marks on the floor and walls that look as though there were once furnishings here—possibly a long counter and some lockers. For some reason it was all dismantled and there's nothing here but dust now.

3F

Living Modules

Yet more stark, shabby, miserable dormitories. Every one of the bunks on the triple-deckers beds appears to have been in use—the may even have been sleeping in shifts. Conditions in most prisons are better. But perhaps not Russian prisons.

There are one or two footlockers or other chests of personal gear scattered around the room but none of them contain anything of value. Just a few old clothes and the occasional tattered photograph.

3G

Officers' Quarters

More residential tubes for higher-ranking staff. As noted above, each one resembles a room in a Japanese “coffin-hotel”—a padded cylinder without enough room to stand. The quarters seem fairly Spartan, but they are luxurious compared to the “Living Module” Dormitories.

Each one is Toughness 7 and weighs two tons. It takes a Strength Check vs. DC 28 to tear a tube loose from the floor. If used as a weapon, a tube would do 8 damage.

The hatches on each unit are Toughness 8 and take a Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 to open if they are locked from the inside. A hatch cover does 5 damage if used as a weapon.

3H

Restroom

Much like the other restrooms in the complex. Big, cold, and grim, with no seats on the toilets and security cameras openly visible on the walls.

3J

Storage

More rooms filled with more crates of supplies, most of them uselessly corroded, old and stale. There is a faint chance that a PC opening crates at random might find something of value here, but we'll leave the odds up to the GM

Most of these crates stored here have Toughness 4 metal casings. Some weigh as little as 50 pounds and do 2 damage if picked up and used as weapons. The biggest crates weigh up to 1,500 pounds and do 6 damage.

3K

Conference Rooms

It's hard to imagine getting anything productive accomplished in these meeting rooms. The furnishings are made of uncomfortable metal, the concrete walls are depressing and blank, the uncarpeted floors have a loud, obnoxious echo. And in fact these rooms seem to have been little used. Most contain more than one set of metal conference tables, as though they were

intended to host more than one gathering at a time.

3L

Infirmary

The base's Infirmary looks bigger than it needs to be—it's as large as a hospital ward. And why do the beds all have restraints? This is the cleanest room in the complex, but it still doesn't look clean enough to have surgery here. Hospital beds surround a central space, enclosed by transparent plastic walls (Toughness 6) where three operating tables and a wide variety of Soviet-era medical equipment can be seen. One of the patients is still strapped to his bed. He appears to have been dead for a long time, withered and mummified. But if anyone with the Descriptor "Magic" on their powers gets within five feet of him, his eyes will snap open. They are glistening, wet, and alive. Dissect him and you'll find that his brain is alive, too. He can't move or speak and he's only Toughness 1. It's tough to communicate with his brain via telepathy, first because he's insane with grief, boredom and despair, and second because his native language is Chechen. In any case he just keeps thinking the same phrase over and over. A telepath who has Comprehend (or who speaks Chechen) will find that that it means "The Walls Want Your Blood."

3M

Detention

Soviet Science City Six needed a lot of detention space, for there were always a lot of people who needed to be detained. Test subjects, potential test subjects, former test subjects, staff who broke the rules (although they soon found themselves in the category of potential test subjects) staff accused of wanting to break the rules, and so forth.

This single large chamber housed them all, in rows upon rows of 10 foot deep concrete pits. A round steel grating covers the top of each pit. Some of the detainees are still inside. All of them are dead but not all of them are resting peacefully.

Whenever a PC passes outside the door of the Detention Center there is a chance that they will here some kind of

sound coming from inside. Weeping or moaning or faint cries for help (in Russian). Once they step inside, the noises stop.

If the PCs open one of the two or three pits inhabited by the Longing Dead, they will find the occupant either staring up at them hungrily, or curled in a fetal position sobbing, or pacing the floor. They may or may not look dead, depending on how well the PC can see them.

But there are worse things in this room. One of the other pits holds the Penitent and another one holds Single-soldier Regiment—if the Professor is keeping them in this lair.

The steel gratings weigh 40 pounds each and can be torn off their massive hinges with a Strength Check vs. DC 30. A grating does 4 damage if used as a weapon. If you would like to unlock one it requires a Disable Device roll vs. DC 25.

A set of rusty old controls on one wall can unlock any or all of the gratings (Knowledge: Technology Check vs. DC 20 to figure out how the controls work, or DC 15 if you speak Russian, but even if one of the ones containing an undead horror is opened the occupant probably won't be able to climb out by itself.

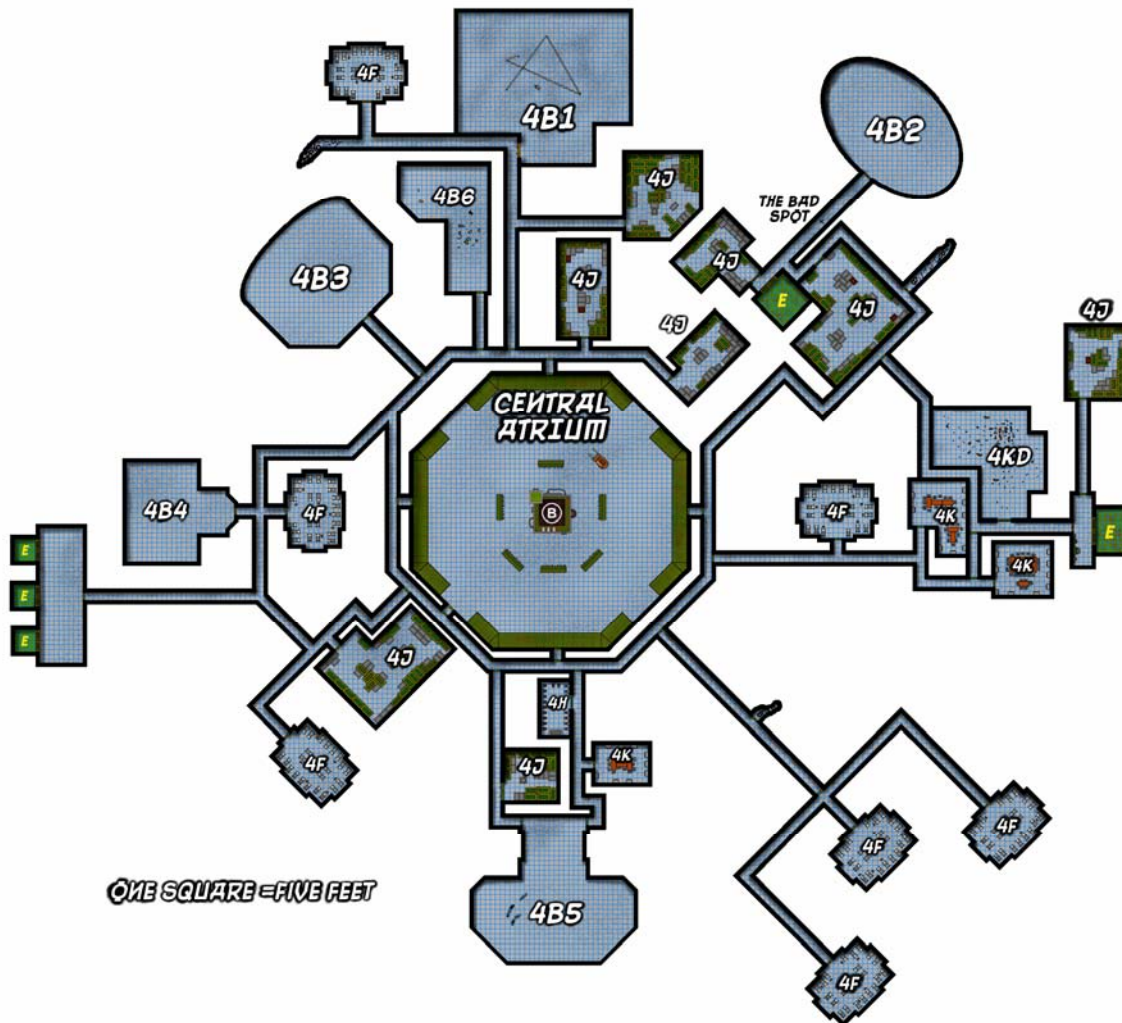
A pair of old aluminum ladders are stacked in one corner. Security personnel used to use these to help detainees climb out of their pits, whenever they were needed elsewhere. Each ladder is twelve feet long, weighs 20 pounds and does 2 damage if used as a weapon.

RR

Rubble-Filled Rooms

In the twenty years since the Disaster at Soviet Science City Six, some of its chambers have collapsed. Choked with huge pieces of rubble and fallen steel beams, these rooms are effectively impassible. Some have doors that still open while others have jammed shut (it's the GM's choice). A super-strong character might be able to pull a chunk of debris big enough to use as a weapon out of one of these rooms. Pieces range as large as five tons and do as much as 8 damage.

LEVEL FOUR



4B (1-6): Test Chambers, 4D: Control Room 4, 4F: Living Module, 4H: Restroom, 4J: Storage, 4K: Conference Rooms, 4KD: Conference Room "D"

Note: Although she died on Level Two (in Test Chamber Six), the Maiden haunts this floor more than any of the others. Anyone who spends time here may find themselves stalked by her. Anyone but Professor Purgatory, that is—she's afraid of him. You can find her stats and description on Page 177

The Bad Spot

When the summoning in Test Chamber 9 went wrong, reality grew a little thinner in

parts of the complex. The "bad spot" in this corridor is one of those places.

The spot occupies one five-foot square in the middle of the hall. Anyone with the power "Super-Senses" and the descriptor "Magic" or who possesses the power of clairvoyance, precognition or postcognition will hear the sound of frenzied, whirling pipes the first time they step on this spot. The sound vanishes the moment they try to get a fix on it with their super-senses or step out of the square. No one else can hear the noise in any case.

This effect does not repeat itself. However, the spot does radiate both magic and evil, if any of the PCs have senses that can detect either of these things.

Superpowers with both of the descriptors “Magic” and “Evil” function at a +2 PL bonus in this square (this includes ranged effects projected into it from somewhere else) and powers that have both the descriptors “Magic” and “Good” suffer a –2 PL penalty.

With a successful Arcane Lore check vs. DC 20 a PC can figure out that this spot is a weak place, a fissure in the surface of reality, created by some big evil event nearby.

For some reason dead things are drawn to the bad spot. If there are dead men in the hall, they will attack whoever is standing in the bad spot in preference to all other targets. The Maiden (see page 177) likes it too, and will be met with here more frequently than anywhere else in the complex.

4B

Test Chambers

There were a lot of these on Level Four. None of them appear to have been in use at the time of the disaster, although there are a lot of machine-oil stains on the floor of B5 and some weird looking mechanical components are strewn around B6. The lights in B2 don't work anymore, leaving the chamber in constant total darkness. There isn't anything sinister going on inside (unless of course the Maiden or the Longing Dead corner someone there). The lights just don't work. In fact the only chamber you really might want to avoid is B1. See below.

4B1

Test Chamber 13

The door to this room has been intentionally jammed. It takes a Strength Check vs. DC 30 to open it (or you could bash through the Toughness 9 metal). No amount of fiddling with the controls will open it—the door has been physically jammed.

Inside, it appears than experiment like the ones in Test Chambers Six and Nine was hastily aborted. A huge chalk pattern, much like the one in Test Chamber Six, has been partly drawn across the floor. For some reason they stopped halfway through.

A young girl with a shaved head and a plain white lab coat lies dead on the floor, her limbs contorted into an unnatural position. She appears to be about ten, or perhaps an undernourished twelve. The card on her junior-miss-sized lab coat identifies her (in Russian) as Esoteric Operative 42. No name is listed. Could she have been one of the Soviet's famous Union's famous military psychics? How did she die here? Why did they abandon the test and seal the room? The PCs will in all likelihood never know the answer.

If someone uses Postcognition or some other such technique to ascertain what happened here, the Maiden (see her stats and description on Page 177) suddenly appears out of nowhere, says “The walls want your blood” in Russian, and attacks. If they manage to fend her off and then try again, they see something very odd. The room had already been sealed and abandoned by the time the girl died here.

She materialized out of nowhere, screaming and kicking, about fifteen feet in the air. Then she fell to the floor, convulsed once, and died. She was a pretty powerful psychic, and the shock of her death creates a ripple in time that obscures everything behind it, so it's impossible to view anything which happened here before that moment.

4F

Living Modules

Somewhere between thirty and sixty men called each of these grimy concrete rooms their home. Yet you can't even smell them any more. Just as on the floors above, each Living Module contains some uncomfortable triple-decker bunk beds and a toilet with no seat. There are no images on the bare walls, no carpeting on the cement floor.

4H

Restrooms

Another equally cavernous, dismal facility. Unclean, Spartan and cold. It's also hard to get used to the cameras.

4J

Storage

There are a lot of these rooms on Level Four. Filled with huge crates, stacked in towering piles, they are good places to evade the ever-present security cameras, since the supplies often block the cameras' line of sight. This also makes them good places for the Maiden (see Page 177) to corner hapless victims.

The crates stored here vary in size and weight. Most are Toughness 4. Some weigh as little as 50 pounds and do 2 damage if used as weapons. The biggest crates weigh as much as 1,500 pounds and do 6 damage. While the crates used to hold everything from canned rations to ammunition to spare electronic parts, the odds are against any of it being usable after having been stored under these conditions for this long. You're frankly better off just using the boxes to hit things with.

4K

Conference Rooms

The rooms on level four seem to have been intended for higher-level meetings. Instead of rusty metal, the tables are made of wood and the chairs are more comfortable. They are still just about as grim as any of the others. Walls and floors are bare concrete, there are no pictures or other ornamentation. The rooms themselves feel too big, and have a harsh echo. Conference Room Number Four is by far the largest, intended for big assemblies and official

announcements. It still serves that function, in a way—but you wouldn't want to schedule a meeting there. See the next entry.

4KD

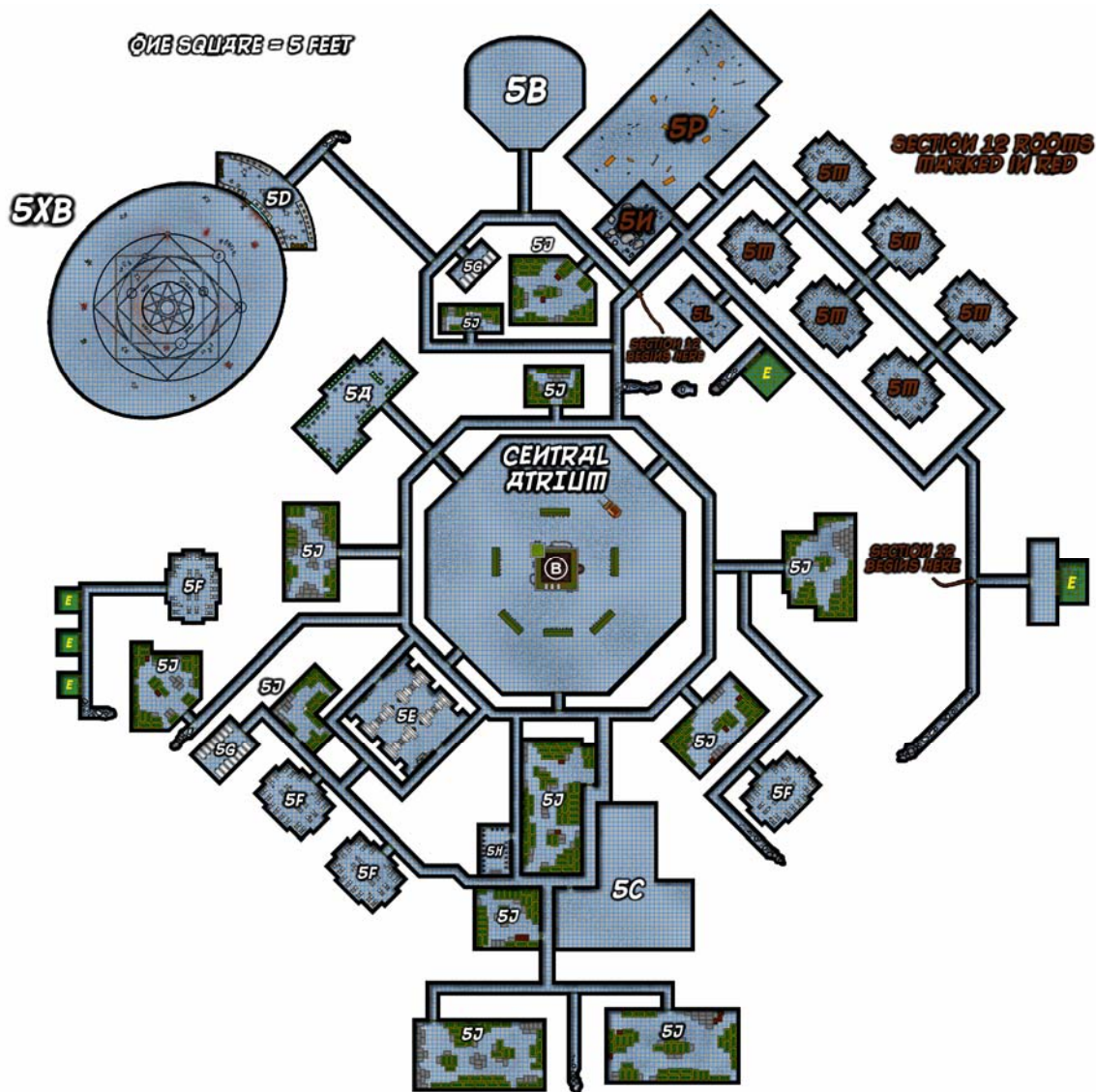
Conference Room D

Every last object in the room has been methodically smashed into tiny bits over the past twenty years, making it hard to identify the chamber's original function.

This used to be the largest conference room on level three, used for shift briefings and big announcements. Now it's overrun with the Longing Dead (see Page 175).

When the Professor first entered the complex, he opened the door to Conference Room D, noticed that it was full of bloodthirsty zombies and closed the door. It seemed like too much work at the time to go in and destroy them all. He keeps meaning to do something about it, but never seems to get around to. For the moment it's easier to keep the door shut. The GM should place enough of the Longing Dead in the room to give the PC group a moderate challenge without decimating them. Scale it to the number and PL of the PCs and be merciful if they're already hurt. As soon as one of them opens the door, the dead men waiting on the other side will try to grapple the nearest person, drag them inside and slam the door shut.

LEVEL 5



5A: Control Room Three, 5B: Test Chambers, 5C: Empty Room, 5D: Control Room Five, 5E: Backup Generator Room, 5F: Living Module, 5G: Officers' Quarters, 5H: Restroom, 5J: Storage, 5K: Conference Rooms, 5L Political Officer's Office, 5M: Section 12 Living Modules, 5N: Ruined Kitchens, 5P: Dining Hall, 5XB: Test Chamber Nine

5A Control Room 3

This room houses the controls for the base's nuclear reactor. The reactor itself is housed

much deeper underground, sealed away from direct human contact.

The controls on the big clunky old workstations are in Russian, but if you can

read them then you could disable the reactor with a Disable Device roll vs. DC 20. This takes a minimum of one minute and you need to sit at three different terminals, one after the other. With a Disable Device roll vs. DC 25 you could cause the reactor to melt down in 1d20+5 hours (another Disable Device roll vs. DC 25 can fix the problem right up until the last two hours).

In the event of a meltdown, long-silent klaxon horns start blaring and a scratchy tape-recorded Russian voice starts saying “nuclear emergency, please to evacuate with all due haste” one hour before the reactor goes critical. There is no countdown. The complex's sensors aren't sophisticated enough to figure out precisely when the reactor will melt. Despite the voice's instructions to evacuate, every unlocked door in the base automatically slams shut and locks itself.

The meltdown itself is a bit of an anticlimax. The reactor is buried so deeply that it won't actually destroy the complex. The floor shakes, new cracks appear in the walls here and there and all the lights go out forever. Over the course of the next five years, so much radioactive material seeps into the soil that all the vegetation within a ten-mile radius will die, and anyone who drinks the local groundwater will get cancer, but these effects won't be detectable for months.

5B

Test Chambers

Only one of the test chambers on Level Five was ever actually put to use (see 5XB for the details). The others all lie silent, vacant and dark.

5D Control Room Five

The moment you step into Control Room five, it is clear that something awful happened here. Technicians sit mummified and dead at their half-melted controls, sprawled in contortions of agony (or is it ecstasy?) Part of the Southwest wall is covered by a cracked window made of reinforced glass. The window itself is Toughness 8. Yet something has cracked it from side to side. It's impossible to see through the window. Something brown is

caked on it. It feels weirdly cold to the touch, and if you keep touching it with your exposed skin for more than a round, you will feel a mild electric shock and see a black shape appear on the edge of your vision, behind you and to the left (no PCs with X-Ray vision, Immunity to illusions or the ability to see outside the normal spectrum will experience this effect) When you turn to look at it, it's gone. Whatever went wrong at Soviet Science City Six, it happened just on the far side of this window.

A green metal hatch (Toughness 10) stands on either side of the window. Neither one is locked, but both of them are jammed shut and require a Strength check vs. DC 35 to open.

It's impossible to get anything out of the computers or other equipment here. Everything is hopelessly burnt-out and fused.

People who spend too long in this room (an hour or more) sometimes report getting the impression that something is slowly turning the bolts on the southwest wall—from the inside! Professor Purgatory has been inside this room but it doesn't interest him very much. The massive, vault-like Toughness 12 door is open and unlocked, but nothing in the room appears to have been disturbed.

5E

Backup Generators

A set of six emergency backup generators can be found in this room. Each one is huge, weighing 20 tons, and does 8 damage if a super-strong character decides to use it as a weapon. The generators themselves are in great shape for their age. Shiny and new-looking, they would undoubtedly still run if they had new motor oil in them. And fuel, of course. Unfortunately, there isn't any of either.

5G

Officers' Quarters

In addition to the rooms on Level 1, there was also a facility for officers on the bottom level of the complex. It's hard to tell for sure, but this seems to have been where most of the highest-ranking base personnel slept. To judge from the few artifacts they

left behind, they all seem to have been military, rather than scientific staff.

Each sleeping tube is eight feet long, Toughness 7 and weighs two tons. It requires a Strength Check vs. DC 28 to tear one loose from the floor. If used as a weapon, a tube does 8 damage.

Entry hatches are Toughness 8 and take a Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 to open if they are locked (they only lock from the inside). If used as a weapon, a hatch cover does 5 damage.

Just as with the officers' quarters on Level One, the GM should feel free to let the PCs find a journal or some other notes here that might shed some light on the disaster that overcame Soviet Science City Six.

5H Restroom

As dank and gloomy as the facilities on the levels above, but smaller than most of them. It's ironic that you could be hundreds of miles from anywhere, buried deep underground in a facility that has been abandoned for years, and still have no bathroom privacy

Section 12

Not everyone in the complex was lucky enough to die when the accident happened. Yet no one exactly lives, either. A lot of them were left...somewhere in between. Whole areas of Soviet Science City Seven have been claimed by the hungry dead. The Professor has closed all the blast doors leading into Section 12, the most heavily infested zone, and destroyed all the most troublesome things on the other side. If you listen at one of the locked doors, you can faintly hear them scratching and pounding at the other side. Sometimes you can hear what might be a moan.

5L

Demolished Room

It's hard to tell what the original purpose of this room might have been (possibly some kind of administrative office?) since everything inside it has been ripped to tiny little bits by the Longing Dead. There aren't any pieces big enough to be used as improvised weapons among the fragments. The dead men often congregate in this room

for some unknowable reason. There are never less than fifteen of them in here.

5M Damaged Living Modules

Formerly housing for base staff. Each one may or may not hold some of the dead, at the GM's option. For some incomprehensible reason the Longing Dead haven't ripped all the furnishings to bits. It looks as though the residents of these dorms just walked out a minute ago.

A beleaguered Player Character might be able to hide out in an empty module while the dead men pound away at the door. All the doors still open and shut. For some reason they either haven't been able to rip them off their hinges or they haven't tried.

5N Ruined Kitchens

Half-filled with rubble, this room was once the base's main kitchen, but all of its contents have been ripped-up, broken, scattered and lost. The only thing of value you might find here is a chunk of debris big enough to clobber someone with. The biggest weigh up to 800 pounds and do up to 5 damage.

5P The Dining Hall

The largest chamber in Section 12, the Longing Dead avoid this room. For something worse and weirder haunts this place. Something that they cannot abide. Any PC who enters this room hears a brief sound, as though someone suddenly switched off a radio before you could make out the music. If they are being pursued by the inhabitants of Section 12, their pursuers stop at the door and stand there, glowering and snarling.

This was clearly a dining hall, there are overturned tables and chairs on the floor. A metal plate and a fork or two lie scattered around here and there. Suddenly, one of the PCs (always one without any kind of mystical super-senses) sees a grinning middle aged man standing in their peripheral vision. He is wearing a ripped-up lab coat and trembling with joy. Blood pours down his chin. When they turn to look at him, directly he's gone. No one else saw him.

Two rounds later, the fun really starts. Out of nowhere, the room is full of half-naked middle-aged Russian men, wearing the remnants of uniforms and lab coats, dancing and dancing in a frenzy of wild mad joy. No music can be heard, and while the dancers look completely solid, they are in fact intangible, ephemeral ghosts (not even Immaterial, they are phantasmal Illusions, and will not show up on cameras or recording devices. Constructs, PCs who are immune to Illusions cannot see them). The dead men at the door moan and run away. Anyone who remains in the room will suffer a PL 12 Mind Control attack every round, compelling them to join the dance. If they are caught up in the dance, they can hear the shrieking, wailing madness of the pipes in all its delirious ecstasy. They can resist the effect every round, but have to keep resisting for long enough to get out the door, or they will start dancing again. And if they do make it to the door, the Longing Dead are waiting down the hall.

5XB

Test Chamber IX

This is where everything went wrong. Test Chamber Nine is the largest in the facility—it's the size of an aircraft hanger and the roof is twenty feet high. The door and walls are PL 15 and it takes a Disable Device Check vs. DC 20 to get them open, but that won't stop the thing that dwells here from getting out.

Whenever you open the door and step inside, you get the sudden, uncanny feeling that someone was just talking a second ago and that they've suddenly gone quiet. Stay in the room for more than five rounds and you will start to hear a faint whispering noise on the edge of your hearing. It could be wind, although of course there is never any wind here, or it could almost be words, spoken in an urgent hushed mumble, just barely too low to make out. Try to focus on the sound with any kind of super-senses and it goes away (although everyone else can still hear it).

Metal tracks intended for cranes criss-cross back and forth across the ceiling but none of them were ever used. The room is completely devoid of equipment.

Instead, a massive diagram covers most of the floor. It resembles the one in Test Chamber Six and some of the designs on the blackboards in the Math Labs, but it's far more elaborate. The lines look almost three dimensional and seem to cross over one another in impossible ways. Some people report getting vertigo from looking at them for more than a few moments. They also seems to throb and pulse in your peripheral vision, although this effect goes away if you look at them directly. The diagram seems to have been written mostly in chalk, and there is a chalk-lining machine of the kind used by baseball parks resting near one wall. The central lines were done in something dark and sticky. It looks like dried blood, but it's not at all smeary—the lines are laid out with enormous precision, as though made by a machine.

The walls are spattered with something thick and gooey and brown—in fact the viewing window from Control Room five is completely covered in it. The stuff smells like rotting meat.

Fifteen different corpses lie scattered around the room, contorted in positions that only circus acrobats would normally be capable of. Anyone who looks at them will get the irrational feeling that they look like letters in some unknown alphabet and that they are part of the design.

The floor seems to slope down like a bowl toward the center of the diagram, which is just a little too low to be seen. This is an optical illusion. The floor is in fact perfectly level—it's space that's bent here. No matter how close you walk to the center of the diagram, it remains invisible, as though it were down-slope from you. It looks that way even from above. You actually have to step into the center ring to see it.

The central ring is empty, but dust or smoke will swirl in strange, suggestive patterns here. The whispering is louder, and it's definitely voices. From the center of the design, you can see through the entire complex, as though you had X-ray vision or Clairvoyance. However, anyone who actually has X-Ray Vision or Clairvoyance who uses either of those powers while

standing at the center of the diagram glimpses something unspeakable lurking behind the veil of reality and suffers a PL 10 Nauseate attack.

The entire room radiates both evil and magic, for those who can detect them. Anyone who uses a super-power with the Descriptors "Magic" and "Evil" in this room will find that they function at an extra 2 PLs worth of power. Any powers with the descriptors "Magic" and "Good" function at a -2 PL penalty. The bonus and the penalty are raised to plus or minus three if you stand in the very center of the diagram.

If anyone uses a psychic or magical power in this room, the GM is free to announce that the Delirium is stirring. Any of the following things may happen.

- 1) The Longing Dead suddenly gain the Powers "Super-Movement (Permeate)", and "Teleport (PL 5, Extra: Accurate; Flaws: Short Range[Can't make Extended Range teleports], Limited Power [can only be used when no one is looking directly at the user])" and go rampaging through the complex.
- 2) Everyone in the complex with any kind of magical or psychic powers simultaneously hears the sound of insane, frenzied pipes, and suffers a PL 15 Stunning attack.
- 3) Everyone in the complex suffers a PL 15 Mind Control compulsion to stop whatever they are doing and dance wildly for 1-20 rounds.
- 4) The person in Test Chamber 9 who has the highest Wisdom score suffers a PL 15 Mind Control attack. If the succumb, they will walk to the center of the diagram, fall down and start screaming "the walls want your blood" in Russian, over and over and over again. They can attempt to break the grip of the Mind Control in the usual ways.
- 5) The Delirium wakes up. It's here now and oh how we all will pay. See its stats on Page 171

What Were They Trying to Summon?



The ancient Romans called it the Great God Pan. The Celts called it Cerullos, master of the Wild Hunt. Others call it the Mad One, the Dancing Devourer and the Black Goat of the Woods. A frenzied, wild thing, spirit of insanity, ecstasy and glee, it dances in the chaos at the heart of atoms and across the cosmic void to the delirious shrieking of the pipes. What would have happened if it came through the door? The men who died here died laughing, but would it bring this same deadly joy to the world or would it have eaten all our happiness, consumed our madness and our genius and our songs and left us gray and dead and empty? Let us hope we never know. Yet some part of it did manage to manifest inside Soviet Science City VI. See the section on "The Delirium" in Appendix 2, Page 171 for more details.

APPENDIX II: SUPPORTING CAST

THE BORDERERS



The Borderers are brutish humanoids native to a now-destroyed alternate universe; they were created to serve the more advanced ruling race of that universe, but they escaped their continuum's collapse into cosmic madness while their masters did not. The beings they served had constructed several dimension-spanning vehicles capable of traversing alternate worlds. The Borderers encountered in this adventure commandeered of the smallest of these vehicles and used it to roam the nether-regions between the planes, scavenging and looting from other inter-dimensional travelers. Over time the planar ship's systems began to break down, and the Borderers lacked the skills necessary to make repairs. Their time seemed to be at an end.

Professor Purgatory discovered the Borderers and their foundering vessel on one of his explorations of the outer planes. Sensing their predicament, the Professor offered to restore the ship's systems in return for assuming control of the vessel. The Borderers readily agreed, so long as they were allowed to remain living on the ship, which Professor Purgatory rechristened *Paradise Delayed*. Professor Purgatory occasionally uses Borderer males as soldiers, while they continue to use the ship as a safe haven between their extra-dimensional raids. The women and children sometimes work as

the Professor's servants, performing menial tasks. But for the most part the Borderers and the Professor simply co-inhabit the *Paradise Delayed*. They feel no particular love for him. If they see superheroes break into the ship, they will try to defend their homes and possessions, but they won't bother to warn Professor Purgatory.

The Borderers resemble squat, stocky humans with blocky features; they have hairless bodies and pupil-less eyes. They range from dull grey to metallic blue in color. The Borderers were bred as laborers and servants, and their strength and stamina are slightly superhuman. Their bodies are not entirely organic in nature, and they must regularly consume rare metals and minerals to sustain themselves. Despite being rather dull-witted as a race, they are familiar with the technologies of their former masters, allowing them to use devices such as blasters and one-man flight platforms. They employ only the most basic tactics in combat and quickly fall back if they are outmatched. Female members of the race are smaller and sleeker of build, and are also slightly more intelligent. Females and children are strictly non-combatants; only male Borderers are warriors. The race as a whole is concerned only with the work necessary for survival and the simple pleasures of food, shelter, and reproduction.

The Borderers (Warrior Caste)

PL: 6

Str: 24 (+7) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 24 (+7)
Int: 6 (-2) **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus:** 5 **Defense:** 5
Toughness Save: 5 **Fortitude Save:** 0
Reflexes Save: 0 **Willpower Save:** -1

Skills: Survival 12 (+11), Notice 11 (+10)

Feats: Chokehold, Endurance, Improved Grapple, Tracking

Powers: Device (Flying Platform [Flight 9]), Device (Blaster [Blast 6] or Vibronic Axe [Strike 6]), Super-Strength 1 (Maximum Lift:

2,800 pounds), Super-Senses (Low-Light Vision) 1

Complications: Completely unaware of how human society functions and not interested in learning

The Borderers (Experienced Warrior/Leader)



PL: 8

Str: 26 (+8) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 24 (+7)
Int: 6 (-2) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 8 **Defense:** 8
Toughness Save: 7 **Fortitude Save:** 0
Reflexes Save: 1 **Willpower Save:** 0

Skills: Intimidate 4 (+6), Knowledge (tactics) 4 (+2), Survival 8 (+8), Notice 11 (+11)

Feats: Chokehold, Endurance, Improved Grapple, Leadership, Move-by Attack, Power Attack, Takedown Attack, Tracking

Powers: Device (Flying Platform [Flight 9]), Device (Blaster [Blast 6]), Super-Strength 1 (Maximum Lift: 2,800 pounds), Super-Senses (Low-Light Vision) 1

Complications: Completely unaware of how human society functions and not interested in learning

The Borderers (Women and Children)

PL: 3

Str: 20 (+5) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 24 (+7)
Int: 8 (-1) **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus:** 3 **Defense:** 3

Toughness Save: 7 **Fortitude Save:** 7

Reflexes Save: 0 **Willpower Save:** -1

Skills: Profession (servant) 2 (+1), Survival 9 (+8), Notice 9 (+8)

Feats: Endurance, Improved Grapple

Powers: Super-Strength 1 (Maximum Lift: 1,600 pounds), Super-Senses (Low-Light Vision) 1

Complications: Completely unaware of how human society functions and not interested in learning

THE VORE DOGS

Perhaps the only living species native to The White are the Vore-Dogs. Though hailing from another far-flung plane, they have evolved over hundreds of generations since their arrival in this dimension. The body of a Vore-Dog is vaguely the size and shape of a mastiff. The beast is covered in metallic scales and each of the creature's six limbs ends in four wickedly barbed claws. The "head" of a Vore-Dog consists of a wide, gaping maw filled with crushing teeth, ringed by stalked sensory organs. Vore-Dogs are blind, but possess keen hearing and other, more esoteric senses unknown to humankind. Vore-Dogs are scavengers, capable of consuming both organic and inorganic matter, but will not refrain from attacking living prey. Semi-intelligent, they are normally vicious, aggressive pack animals, but can be broken and tamed so long as they are kept only in pairs. Professor Purgatory has trained a number of them to serve as "watchdogs" for his lair, simply because it amused him to do so. Despite being relatively bright, Vore-Dogs have typically bestial instincts; they reflexively recoil from flame and are vulnerable to high-frequency sounds, which cause them intense pain. Adult Vore-Dogs are PL 4, while immature specimens are PL 3.

The Vore Dogs (Adult)



PL: 4

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 18 (+4)
Int: 4 (-3) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 4 **Defense:** 4
Toughness Save: 4 **Fortitude Save:** 4
Reflexes Save: 4 **Willpower Save:** 1

Skills: Notice 4 (+5), Stealth 4 (+5),
Survival 4 (+5)

Feats: Fast Overrun, Improved Grab, Sneak
Attack, Tracking

Powers: Additional Limbs 2, Speed 2, Strike
3 (Bite Attack), Super-Senses 10 (Accurate
Scent, Acute Scent, Blindsight [Power Feat:
Dimensional]), Detect Life Energies, Tracking
[With weird other senses] 1)

Drawbacks: Disabled, has no hands, can't
use tools -5pts

The Vore Dogs (Immature)

PL: 3

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 4 (-3) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 3 **Defense:** 3
Toughness Save: 3 **Fortitude Save:** 4
Reflexes Save: 3 **Willpower Save:** 1

Skills: Notice 4 (+4), Survival 4 (+4)

Feats: Fast Overrun, Improved Grab, Sneak
Attack, Tracking

Powers: Additional Limbs 2, Speed 3, Strike
2 (Bite Attack), Super-Senses 10 (Accurate
Scent, Acute Scent, Blindsight [Power Feat:
Dimensional]), Detect Life Energies, Tracking
[With weird other senses] 1)

The Discarded



PL: 6

Str: 22 (+6) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 18 (+4)
Int: 8 (-2) **Wis:** 8 (-1) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus:** 5 **Defense:** 5
Toughness Save: 4 **Fortitude Save:** 4
Reflexes Save: 0 **Willpower Save:** -1

Skills: Climb 4 (+10), Survival 8 (+7),
Notice 6 (+5), Stealth 8 (+8)

Feats: Chokehold, Endurance, Improved
Grapple, Improved Pin

Powers: Adaptation 6, Growth 4 (Size:
Large; Power Feat: Innate; Flaw:
Permanent), Object Mimicry 6, Super-
Strength 1 (Maximum Lift: 2,800 pounds),
Super-Senses 1 (Low-Light Vision)

Complications: Horribly ugly, would be
unable to function in normal human society.

Drawbacks: Any damage result of
"Disabled" destroys them utterly.

Background and History

These pathetic creatures-whom Professor
Purgatory dubbed "Formorians", after the
deformed giants of legend, are the result of
the Professor's continuing attempts to
replicate the traits of his unwilling servant
Regiment. After two attempts to clone the
Sino-superman directly resulted in
disastrous failures (see the Legion clones
under Regiment's individual entry), the
Professor changed tactics. Hypothesizing

that his failures were a result of the inherent problems in attempting to clone the Chinese super-soldier's already unstable genetic code, the Professor instead decided to graft Regiment's post-human traits onto more stable subjects—living, adult human beings.

The Professor then committed a series of abductions—drug addicts, street gang members, prostitutes, and others whose lifestyles made them unlikely to be missed. He rationalized that his victims were living sinful lives, wasting the gift of their God-given existences; in his hands their lives would finally serve a meaningful purpose. Not only would they further his knowledge of science and medicine, but they might well provide him with the means to save humanity from itself. Professor Purgatory reasoned that humans sinned because they were fearful and weak; if instead they were strong and fearless, would then they not go forth and sin no more? His actions fully justified in his own mind, he proceeded with his experiments, twisting his human guinea pigs' molecular structures to reflect that of Regiment. This subjected them to utterly indescribable agony in the process, but some unpleasantness was almost always unavoidable in such matters, after all. Unfortunately, the results of this new approach were almost as disappointing as those of his initial attempts. The test subjects (those that survived) did become larger, stronger and more resilient, but their growth did not stop until they were grotesquely large (huge, in a few cases) and mis-proportioned. Some of them suffered from stunted or crippled limbs, while others grew useless extra appendages. Their minds regressed into those of child-like intelligence. They did gain some extraordinary abilities—they could adapt their bodies to survive in almost any environment, and even more astoundingly they could mimic the properties of nearly any substance they can in contact with—metal, wood, even man—made compounds such as plastics. But their structures were also unstable. Any who suffered a wound significant enough to displace a portion of their body matter would begin to break down, rapidly crumbling into a pile of inert

crystals. Reserving them for future study and "improvement", the Professor contained them in the ship's holding cells until such time as he could determine where his efforts had gone awry.

The Discarded were freed from containment when the *Paradise Delayed* came under attack from a multi-limbed extra-dimensional creature of colossal size. The monster had been spewed into the void of the While through a random worm-hole, and attacked the ship in its death throes. The Professor and the rest of the *Ordo Ultimo* were successful in fending off the beast until it expired from exposure to the emptiness outside the ship, but the behemoth succeeded in causing a fair amount of damage before its demise. This is what allowed the Discarded to escape their cells and flee to the furthest bowels of the ship.

The unfortunate creatures now lead a primitive existence, skulking about to snatch whatever meager supplies they can without being discovered and occasionally mustering the courage to attack *Borderer* encampments to seize more desirable goods. They are loosely organized into an extended family, somewhat similar to Stone-Age humans; though they sometimes quarrel and battle amongst themselves, they are all protective of each other and of their "family" as a whole against outsiders. They are not aggressive, but will attack if desperate for food or other necessary items. They have a healthy fear of beings exhibiting obvious superhuman powers due to their experience with Professor Purgatory, but will still attack gaudily-clad figures who intrude too far into their territory.

Stragglers whom they can gang-up on and easily prevent from getting help from possible allies are also fair game. The Discarded can be reasoned with—they have vague memories of their former lives and a basic grasp of English—but they are distrustful and wary, interpreting any possible hostility as cause to attack or flee. They will scatter in terror at the sight of Professor Purgatory, doing everything they can to avoid recapture, preferring death to the pain of once again falling into his grasp.

The Goop



PL: 8

Str: 30 (+10) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 26 (+8)
Int: 1 (-5) **Wis:** - **Cha:** - **Initiative:** 0
Attack Bonus: 5 (Includes -4 penalty from Growth) **Defense:** -4 (Includes -4 penalty from Growth) **Toughness Save:** 8
Fortitude Save: 8 **Reflexes Save:** 0
Willpower Save: n/a

Feats: Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Improved Pin

Powers: Growth 12 (Extra: Innate; Flaw: Permanent), Immunity 32 (Aging, Suffocation, all Willpower effects), Insubstantial 5 (Liquid Form; Extra: Innate; Flaw: Permanent), Strike 5 (Acid Touch; Extra: Aura; Flaw: Limited [Only works on organic targets]), Super-Senses 7 (Acute Smell, Accurate Smell, Blindsight, Tremorsense)

Complications: Always hungry, but won't attack anyone wearing the Professor's special safety pheromone.

Drawback: Disabled (has no hands, can't speak)

Background and History

The race that bred the Borderers had other servant organisms. The Goop was bio-engineered from an odd life form they imported from a highly magical alternate earth, one where great winged reptiles dominated the skies and sprawling underground lairs proliferated throughout the world. This world had a number of ooze-like creatures that were readily

adapted to suit the more utilitarian purposes of the race. The cube-like life form that served as the progenitor for the Goop was capable of quickly enveloping and breaking down organic matter. This made it ideal for the purpose of helping to deal with the waste materials generated on a ship the size of the Paradise Delayed. Thus was born the Goop.

The Goop (the singular and plural for the species are identical) were huge, single celled creatures that shared their ancestor's ability to disintegrate organic compounds, but whereas their "grandmother" was aggressive, they were timid, shying away from confrontations with other beings. They were bio-designed to be extremely long-lived, but sterile; they could not reproduce by fission as their ancestor could. They were also more malleable and protean of form than the original, able to flow and mold their physical structures to match the shape and dimensions of the various rooms and corridors found on their creator-race's dimension-spanning ships. Furthermore, their secretions were harmless to the Borderers, whose make-up included many inorganic, mineral elements. They occasionally made a slimy nuisance of themselves, but were essentially harmless to the crews of the ships, serving as an efficient janitorial staff, allowing the ships to dispose of waste without polluting the inter-dimensional oceans.

Since the collapse of the creator race and the uncharted wanderings of the Paradise Delayed through the continuum, the Goop began to die out—they lacked the ability to reproduce and no more were being created. All but a handful have since perished. Those that remain have grown QUITE large, ravenously hungry—and have lost their timidity

Though the Goop still cannot prey upon the Borderers for sustenance, their sheer size and mass makes them a danger even for a squad of Borderer warriors. They can feed upon human flesh and will attempt to do so if given the opportunity; more than one has attacked the members of the Ordo Ultimo. The Professor destroyed several before coming up with a scientific solution. He created a pheromone spray that repels

the creatures, and issued an order that all his followers were to wear this peculiar perfume when venturing into any area of the ship where the things were known to frequent in search of food. Outsiders to the ship will have no such defense of course.

Goop have minimal intelligence, operating on instinct. They lack sight and hearing, guided primarily by smell and touch. The creatures all share an inherent weakness to cold and electricity, but are invulnerable to fire.

The Delirium

The researchers at Soviet Science City VI nearly succeeded in their goal of bringing forth and chaining a primordial figure from beyond space and time. They were on the verge of summoning a being they had identified as the entity the Romans called the Great God Pan when the unforeseeable happened; one of the psychic containment team assembled for the purpose of controlling the thing suffered a brain aneurysm, dying instantly. The senior technician in the control room recognized the catastrophe that would result if they went ahead with the summoning and began to shut the process down within seconds. Which is to say, far too late.

The Great God Pan did not emerge but *something* did—perhaps a tiny fragment, or a notion, or even the merest thought of some horrible demiurge. The newly birthed god-thought swiftly overwhelmed the psyches of the population of Soviet Science City Six. It feasted on human joy—every happy thought, good memory, pleasant sensation—driving the minds of those it touched to experience unrivaled ecstasy that inevitably turned to agony and madness. And as it was too gluttonous to feed at the pace that humans lived out their spans, it simply unraveled time and forced its victims to burn through years of pleasure-and life—in a matter of hours. The entire population of the complex perished within a forty eight hour span, dying of accelerated old age or at the maniacal hands of their comrades.

That was nearly three decades ago. Since that time, the Delirium has lacked for human victims to feed upon, as the Soviets

enforced a strict quarantine around the entire area. Deprived of sustenance, it entered a quiescent state from which it has yet to fully emerge. Yet it has begun to stir with the arrival of Professor Purgatory and his Ordo Ultimo. It waits to reemerge and break forth from the confines of the Science City into the wider world. It may yet get that chance.

The GM should use the Delirium as a plot device in an adventure that sees the player characters confronting the Ordo Ultimo in this particular lair. It can arise to attempt possession of any or all of the heroes or villains present. In game terms, targets of the entity must attempt a DC 15 Will saving throw; failure indicates the characters are infected with the madness of the Delirium, and will increasingly act in a more and more irrational fashion, giggling and laughing uncontrollably while taking more and more irrational risks in the insane pursuit of every pleasure available. Any affected characters become manic and then violently psychotic; they as if under the effects of the Rage feat, and gain the benefits of the Die Hard feat and Mental Protection 10, becoming very difficult to control or bring down physically. The victims of the possession also begin to age rapidly, growing five years older each *hour*. Victims of accelerated aging suffer all the physical effects associated with advancing age (losing one point of Str, Dex, and Con at middle age [40], another two points at old age [60], and an additional three points at venerable age [70]) but gain no bonuses to their mental traits as a result; beyond age 80, victims grow older at the rate of 5 years per *minute*, and lose one point of Con each round until they expire. Death is not necessarily the end for those whose lives are stolen by the Delirium—those who perish must attempt DC 20 Will save. Any who succeed are reanimated as members of the Longing Dead. If the Delirium can be driven out of a possessed individual before the process runs its course, the victim will recover their lost years at the same rate they were lost. A successful Nullify power check against DC 15 will expel the Delirium from a victim. Extending this effect to encompass the entirety of the Science City

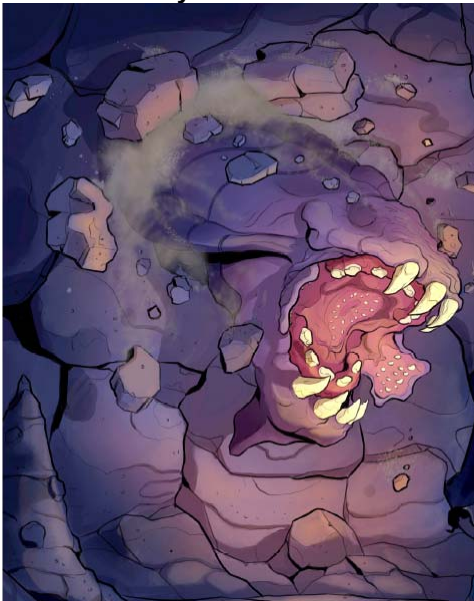
will completely exorcise the entity from our reality.

Victims of the Delirium will try to escape the crumbling Soviet complex if they can—the creature has no desire to remain trapped within the confines of the subterranean city. Once outside, any infected will make for the nearest human habitation, driven to spread the madness. The threat could soon be world-wide.

Professor Purgatory and Sister Splendor are unlikely to be affected due to their strength of will; Cryptic Star, the Out-Warder, Sister Tranquility, and X'Hort cannot be infected due to their unique brain structures or mental states; the Rage Angels are already insane, though they will be even more agitated and animalistic while inside the Russian compound, while the Penitent will paradoxically be awash with feeling of calm and contentment.

The Cretin and Single-Soldier Regiment are the one ones out of the group truly susceptible. Cretin would be relatively easy to restrain, but preventing Regiment from escaping would be far more difficult. Even worse, Regiment's eternally regenerating tissues make him immune to the induced aging associated with the madness, meaning he would not expire before he could reach an inhabited area and spread the taint.

The Necro-Wyrms



PL: 16

Str: 46 (+18) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** 42 (+16)
Int: 4 (-3) **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus:** 4 **Defense:** 0
Toughness Save: 16 **Fortitude Save:** 16
Reflexes Save: 0 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Intimidate 4 (+20), Notice 10 (+10)

Feats: Ambidextrous, Distract (Linked to Intimidate), Environmental Adaptation (Toxic Atmosphere), Environmental Adaptation (Underground), Fearsome Presence 8, Improved Grab, Startle

Powers: Additional Limbs 4 (Can use up to ten of its many limbs at once), Immunity 5 (Aging, Cold, Critical Hits, Pressure), Growth 12 (Size: Colossal; Grapple Modifier: 16; Stealth Modifier: -16; Intimidation Modifier: 8; Space: 30 feet; Reach: 15 feet; Extras: Innate, Flaw: Permanent), Super-Senses (Accurate Smell, Acute Smell, Extended Range [Hearing] 3 [x1,000], Extended Range [Smell] 4 [x10,000], Infravision, Low-Light Vision, Ultravision)

Drawbacks: Disabled (Mute)

Background and History

One of the few remaining indigenous life forms on the decimated alternate world once known as H'raath, the grotesque Necro-Wyrms evolved ages ago from tiny creatures that bore a distant similarity to Terran centipedes. No longer than a human fingernail when birthed, the eldest Necro-Wyrms are astonishing in their size, spanning over fifty meters (150+ ft) and massing nearly one hundred tons. Thankfully such prodigious specimens are rare, with most adult members of the species roughly half this size.

The Necro-Wyrms resemble monstrous armored centipedes with worm-like heads that end in a gaping toothed maw. The creature's mouth is ringed with massive cilia that endlessly wriggle and twist, searching for the scent of food. The Necro-Wyrms are omnivores, but are specifically adapted to feed on the nitrogen rich soil formed by the rotting, long decayed carcasses of the world's dead. They burrow through the loam of the planet, devouring such material and forming gigantic, endless tunnels as they do so. As nearly all flora and fauna perished untold centuries or even millennia ago, the species food supply, once plentiful, is rapidly growing thin. The

creatures supplement their diets by feasting on the few remaining subterranean reptiles, insects, and other vermin. They are not at all adverse to trying new sources of sustenance, fresher and more satisfying than their usual fare.

Non-intelligent, the Necro-Wyrms are driven entirely by their instincts and their hunger. Their primary sensory organs are their cilia, which allow them to "see" into the infrared spectrum and detect chemical scents that might signal the presence of food. Their senses are keen, operating at a distance of several miles. The Necro-Wyrms stand at the top of an extremely short food-chain, and have no real offensive abilities except their mammoth size and their myriad pincers which can excavate tons of earth. Then again, then really need nothing else.

One of the oldest and hugest Wyrms has long staked a claim to the Dome (Purgatory's Garden) and whatever delicacies lay inside. The monster has been denied time and time and time again by the energy aura that activates whenever the leviathan approaches too closely, even from below the compound. If the Dome's power ever falters, the Wurm will attempt to breach the walls to get at whatever—or whoever—is inside. This will of course result in the destruction of the complex. Professor Purgatory has recently discovered that the monster is lurking about (it spends most of it's time semi-buried underneath the ground) and resolved to personally lead a hunting party composed of X'Hort and his honor-guard of Borderer warriors to go out and slay the thing. Or perhaps he will simply summon the Penitent and have that worthy dispose of the gargantua instead...

The Voracious Legion



PL: 6

Str: 24 (+7) **Dex:** 8 (-1) **Con:** - **Int:** 8 (-1)
Wis: 16 (+3) **Cha:** 10
Initiative: -1 **Attack:** 6 **Defense:** 4
Toughness Save: 6 **Fortitude Save:** -
Reflex Save: -1 **Willpower Save:** 3 (6 vs. mental attacks)

Skills: Intimidate 8 (+8), Notice 3 (+6),
Feats: Fearsome Presence 5, Power Attack, Startle.

Powers: Immunity 30 (fortitude effects), Mind Shield 3, Impervious Protection 6 (Flaw: Limited—only vs. fire damage), Super-Senses 2 (Darkvision)

Equipment: Armor (6 Protection), sword or axe (Melee Weapon, 7 damage), Sonic Disrupter (Ranged Weapon, 7 damage), Gourd-Grenade (Thrown burst-weapon, does 4 damage to everything in a 5 foot radius every round for three rounds)

Drawback: Instant, Moderate Weakness to cold-based attacks (-1 cumulative penalty to all checks, attack rolls, and Defense.

Background and History

These hulking undead warriors are all that remains of the armies of the glutton-god S'aaar'ah'man, the Eternal Eater. S'aaar'ah'man was a cruel god whose followers exalted in conquest and slaughter.

They were once the scourge of their world, spearheading a centuries-long crusade to topple the existing social order and usher in an age of tyranny and wanton destruction. Their greatest enemies were the servants of H'aa'saar' the Preserver-God.

The acolytes of the glutton-god used their knowledge of divine science to craft massive war-machines and hideous weapons. Perhaps it was one of their abominable creations that transformed H'raath into a scorched wasteland of ash and stone—or maybe the doom that visited their world was an act of nature that knew no difference between the evil and the good, the innocent and the guilty. Whatever the truth, the followers of S'aaar'ah'man died by the millions, annihilated along with everyone else on their world—except for the Voracious Legion.

Shortly before the cataclysm, M'aal'iss'ha—the Legion's matriarch-priestess, slut-bride of the Eternal Eater—had a premonition of the impending disaster. She gathered the fiercest, most merciless warriors of the Legion to her side, bidding them to capture as many captives as they could along their journey and bring these unfortunates to her. She especially encouraged the Legionnaires to secure pregnant females and newly-hatched offspring. She then led them into the deep caverns that extended for miles under the surface of H'raath. There they performed an obscene ritual where that culminated in the sacrifice of their captives and their undying pledge to serve S'aaar'ah'man beyond the end of their world, beyond death or damnation.

The now undead members of the Voracious Legion slumbered in their subterranean burial vaults for untold eons, dreaming hateful dreams of death and conquest that seemed destined to remain forever unfulfilled...until the arrival of Professor Purgatory and the Ordo Ultima on their world. M'aal'iss'ha was stirred to wakefulness by the presence of new life on the surface of the planet. She once again hears the voice of the Eternal Eater in her thoughts—this time speaking to her that there is now a means to escape the dead planet and reach new worlds to plunder,

new populations to murder and terrorize. She has begun assembling the undead forces of the Voracious Legion, calling them back to the waking world to honor the unholy vows they made millennia ago to their dark lord.

The Conquest-Wights are slow-moving, shambling, reptilian creatures clad in battered acid-pitted pieces of body armor and the tattered robes of the Voracious Legion. They each bear a ritual self-inflicted scar in the shape of a tooth-filled maw on their chests. Droplets of black blood perpetually weep from their mouths and eyes, drying into scabrous crusts by the time they strike the dead soil of their world. They each stand between seven and seven and a half feet tall, and their knot-thick muscles are nearly visible underneath their long dead gray-green flesh. Their eyes glow a dull yellow as they stalk across the wind-blasted plains of their darkness shrouded world. They communicate with labored, sibilant rasps that barely rise above a whisper.

The Legion march through the lifeless plains of their world with machine-like precision, never faltering in their military discipline. Their calcified muscles render them slow-moving and clumsy, but grant them an inexorable, crushing strength. Their hides render them impregnable to flame but even in their undead state they suffer the typical reptilian vulnerability to cold.

The Voracious Legion still employ the weapons they wielded in life; wickedly serrated short swords designed to rend and tear flesh, 3' rod-like metal instruments capable of producing devastating bursts of ultra-high frequency sound, and gourd-grenades, which shatter upon impact to unleash a cloud of undead black insects that swarm about any living beings, biting and stinging until the unholy power that animates them dies out, causing the swarm to collapse into a shower of stinking, sulfurous ash.

As noted above, the Legion is led by their M'aal'iss'ha, the favored slut-bride of S'aaar'ah'man. Like the others, she long ago entered the ranks of the unliving, but she still retains much of the abilities granted

to her in life by the Eternal Eater. She can partially assume the forms of various predatory beasts, manipulate the barren wastes of H'raath, and regurgitate noxious, burning bile from within her undead carcass.

M'aal'iss'ha



PL: 11

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 8 (-1) **Con:** -
Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 20 (+5) **Cha:** 18 (+4)
Initiative: -1 **Attack Bonus:** 9
Defense: 13 **Toughness Save:** 11
Fortitude Save: - **Reflexes Save:** -1
Willpower Save: 5

Skills: Craft (artistic) 3 (+6), Bluff 6 (+10), Diplomacy 6 (+10), Intimidate 11 (+15), Knowledge (arcane lore) 11 (+14), Knowledge (H'raathian history) 8 (+11), Language (English), Notice 8 (+13), Stealth 6 (+5).

Feats: Fearsome Presence 7, Inspire, Power Attack, Ritualist, Sneak Attack, Startle.

Powers: Blast 11 (caustic vomit; Extra: Area Effect—cone; Flaw: Unreliable [five uses]; AP: Nauseate 11 [vile excretions]; Extra: Aura; Flaw: Sicken only), Immunity 30 (fortitude effects), Environmental Control 5 (Distraction [sand storms]—DC 10; AP: Heat—extreme heat; AP: Hamper Movement [ground turns to hot tar]—one quarter movement), Mind Shield 6, Impervious

Protection 6 (Flaw: Limited—only vs. fire damage), Shapechange 3 (gain 15 points to spend on traits; Flaw: Limited—dinosaur-like shapes only), Super-Senses 2 (Darkvision).

Drawback: Instant, Moderate Weakness to cold-based attacks (-1 cumulative penalty to all checks, attack rolls, and Defense.

The Longing Dead



PL: 5

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 10 (+0) **Con:** -
Int: 6 (-2) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus:** 5
Defense: 5 **Toughness Save:** 0
Fortitude Save: n/a **Reflexes Save:** 2
Willpower Save: 5

Skills: Climb 5 (+5), Intimidate 8 (+8), Notice 5 (+8)

Feats: Blind-Fighting, Die Hard, Fearless, Fearsome Presence 5, Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Startle

Powers: Anatomic Separation 5 (all four limbs and the head can function independently if severed), Drain Constitution 5, Immunity 30 (all Fortitude Effects), Regeneration 10 (Resurrection: can make a recovery check from death instantly; Flaw: Limited Power [Doesn't allow them to recover from death by fire or Disintegration]), Super-Senses 3 (Darkvision,

Detect Life), Super-Strength 5 (Flaw: Limited Power [Only affects Grapple bonus, does not allow them to lift heavy objects or do more damage])

Complications: Hates the universe, craves the warmth of the living.

Drawbacks: Instant Major Vulnerability (x2 damage) from flame attacks.

Background and History

Not all the soldiers, scientists, and technicians who succumbed to the unleashed Delirium were lucky enough to die. Some of the stronger-willed ones suffered a far worse fate; unwilling to relinquish the rage they felt at having their lives stolen away from them by the obscene entity that had crept out of the crawlspace between worlds, their hatred prevented their souls from wholly moving on from this plane of existence. Instead some remnant of them remained in their hollowed-out shells, seething with anger over all that had been stripped away from them. They long for impossible vengeance against the abomination responsible for their horrific undead state; they long to again know the ecstasy they felt while under the influence of the Delirium; and most of all they long to vent their wrath on the living, those who still know joy and sadness and hope while their every moment is an eternal unchanging nightmare.

The Longing Dead look like pale, elderly men bearing the wounds they suffered in the hours before the end of their mortal lives. Cuts and gashes mar their flesh, exposing raw muscle and bone, and their bodies are caked with long dried blood; they are naked or dressed in rotting rags. Unlike most zombies, they are not slow or lumbering. Instead they move with startling agility and speed. Their bodies are fragile—a strong human can tear holes right through them or pull off their limbs—but they are extraordinarily tenacious, able to soak up tremendous damage and keep on coming. Their sundered limbs will actually continue to attack living prey! The only way to permanently put them down is to destroy their brains or the majority of their body tissues through acid, fire, or the like. Their desiccated bodies are quite vulnerable to

flame, and going up like kindling or old newspapers.

They attack with fists, feet, and teeth, clawing, pummeling, and biting at their targets. They are semi-intelligent and able to use simple weapons such as clubs and blades. The Longing Dead can even communicate to an extent with short one-or-two word sentences and simple gestures. You really don't want to hear them speak, though.

They are not intelligent enough to use guns, vehicles, or most other technological items. Their blows lack power but they can exert a fierce grip when trying to bring down the living. Despite the fact that they gnash at their victims with their broken, jagged teeth, they do not consume flesh. Instead they try to grapple their targets and drag them to the ground, where they then try to steal away their essence, causing the poor unfortunates to rapidly weaken and age, while the Longing Dead gain strength. Those who survive this process regain their youth within a few minutes rest (though other injuries they sustained must heal normally) but any who perish join the Longing Dead.

The Maiden



Real Name: Oxana ???

PL: 10

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** -
Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 20 (+5) **Cha:** 22 (+7)
Initiative: 0 **Attack Bonus:** 8
Defense: 8 **Toughness Save:** 0
Fortitude Save: n/a **Reflexes Save:** 2
Willpower Save: 12

Skills: Bluff 10 (+17), Intimidate 10 (+17),
Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 13 (+16),
Languages (Russian, English, Greek, French,
Latin), Notice 5 (+10), Stealth 8 (+9)

Feats: Blind-Fighting, Die Hard, Distract
(Linked to Intimidate), Fascinate (Linked to
Intimidate), Fearless, Fearsome Presence 10,
Improved Grab, Improved Grapple,
Improved Pin, Startle

Powers: Drain Constitution 10 (Extra:
Affects Corporeal), Immunity 30 (all
Fortitude Effects), Insubstantial 4
(Incorporeal; Extra: Innate; Flaw:
Permanent), Invisibility (8 Point version,
invisible to all visual senses), Regeneration
10 (Resurrection: can make a recovery
check from death instantly; Flaw: Limited
Power [Doesn't allow her to recover from
death by magical attack]), Super Movement
1 (Air Walking), Super-Senses 7 (Darkvision,

Detect Life, X-Ray Vision [can't see through
flesh]), Telepathy 10

Complications: Hates the universe, craves
the warmth of the living.

Background and History

Oxana Zed walked in the shadows for most
of her brief life. By the age of 22 she was
already one of Russia's most famous
paranormal investigators. No one knows
what her real surname was. Raised in one
of the last of the Soviet's crèches for psychic
children, she was solving terrible mysteries
and battling sinister forces by the time she
was eight.

Oxana Zed posted her reports in the
popular press once the State was no longer
able to support her efforts and the crèches
were closed for lack of funds. While she
regretted having to make the results of her
investigations public, she had to eat, and it
was this or work for the mob. Soon she was
famous, although no one knew her last
name or what she looked like.

She discovered the whereabouts of
Soviet Science City Six and came here alone,
looking for occult secrets. In Test Chamber
Five, she found out more than she wanted.
Now her angry ghost stalks the halls of
Soviet Science City Six, something more and
less than human. The Longing Dead flee at
her approach, which the PCs should rightly
take as a very bad sign. The first thing she
ever says to any new person she encounters
is: *"The walls want your blood."*

Angelica De Lynn



PL: 2

Real Identity: Same

Dual Identity: Uses aliases to travel, including Lynnette Adams and Mary D'Angelo.

Group Affiliation: None

Nationality: American

Height: 5' 8"

Weight: 443 pounds

Hair Color: Strawberry-Blond

Eye Color: Green

Age: 33

Str: 8 (-1) **Dex:** 8 (-1) **Con:** 10 (+0)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 6 (-2)
Initiative: -1 **Attack Bonus:** 2
Defense: 2 **Toughness Save:** 0
Fortitude Save: 0 **Reflexes Save:** -1
Willpower Save: 1

Skills: Bluff 5 (+9), Diplomacy 3 (+7), Knowledge (arcane lore) +3, Knowledge (popular culture) 8 (+9), Knowledge (current events) 3 (+4), Notice 3 (+4), Performance 5 (acting) (+9), Profession (Activist) +3, Profession (Model) 8 (+9), Sense Motive 2 (+3).

Feats: Attractive, Connected, Benefit 4 (celebrity status, wealth +3), Minions 8 (five 90 pp bodyguards), Ritualist.

Device: Tome of Forsworn Thaumaturgies (plot device; treat as X ranks of the Magic power with the Uncontrolled flaw, allowing whatever dangerous/unpredictable effect the GM wants to unleash).

Complications: Celebrity (hounded by the press wherever she goes), Obsession (determined to find a means of restoring her former appearance and/or get revenge for her transformation), and Social Stigma (she

is a 430+ lb woman in a world which does not find this beautiful).

Drawbacks: Disabled (hugely obese, movement rate is reduced by ½ [15 feet per round], suffers a -4 penalty to Constitution checks made to resist fatigue from all-out effort or Swimming, a -2 penalty on all Fortitude saves except those pertaining to disease or poison, and a -2 penalty to Reflex saves that require agility. Angelica is treated as if she was Size Large but gets no bonus to height/reach. Total: -4 points.

Background and History

Angelica De Lynn was Hollywood royalty. She is the daughter of a famed American director/screenwriter and a noted French actress who hailed from a family of wealthy industrialists. Her face was gracing fashion magazine covers by the time she was 17, and she won a supporting actress academy award by the time she was 25, for her breakout role in *Girl Exited*. Never shy about her breathtaking beauty or smoldering sexuality, she was been involved in several high-profile relationships (with both men and women) and made a series of controversial statements about politics and religion. She also served as a spokeswoman for a number of worthy causes, donated millions to charities, and was hailed for work in raising awareness of the plight of children in underdeveloped nations.

Unfortunately, her high-profile, unconventional lifestyle brought her to the attention of a sadistic, self-righteous supervillain (or villain group, if the GM prefers) who inflicted a humiliating transformation upon her, bulking Angelica up by over three hundred pounds and reducing her Pilates-toned muscles to flab. This villain then released her back into the world, to suffer the humiliation her new condition would bring. Her career as an actress and model was finished, and her Hollywood power couple romance with a critically adored leading man soon ended as well (after the gentleman "stood by her side" for an obligatory six months).

Understandably traumatized by the emotional and physical ordeal, Angelica was near suicidal for the next six months, requiring a steady diet of prescription anti-

depressants and sedatives to see her through each day. Eventually, psychotherapy enabled her to rebuild her self-image and regain her confidence, and she began to set new goals for her future. Her physique proved much more difficult to reclaim; while physical therapy helped her adjust to her new size, the even the best doctors, personal trainers, and pharmacologists have been unable to help her shed an ounce.

Since learning to adapt somewhat to her new body, Angelica has found two new passions to focus on in her life. First, she has turned her activism to alerting the public about the dangers posed by out of control paranormals—how their unregulated existence puts normal people at risk from beings that can crush steel in their hands, see through walls, and reshape human bodies like putty. She has put her wealth and fame behind this cause, lobbying for federal legislation to more tightly curtail superhuman activities and donating lavishly to support groups for victims of paranormal violence. Second, she has begun researching the occult, searching for supernatural means of restoring her beauty—or failing that, to exact vengeance against the party (or parties) responsible for her current state. While she has not given up on medicine or science, she is increasingly convinced only sorcery will offer her relief.

Despite the end of her movie career, Angelica is still quite well-off—both sides of her family are affluent (though she has had little contact with her father since his split with her mother a decade ago), especially her mother's kin (her uncle is the CEO vice president of a large pharmaceutical firm). She has the means to pursue nearly any resource she feels is necessary to achieve her goals. Angelica doesn't spend enough time considering the dangers of what she's doing and has too much faith in her own ability to handle the situations she creates. Inevitably this will result in consequences that she will regret.

Angelica has just enough knowledge of the occult to pose a danger; she might well end up summoning up an inhuman creature that she cannot control or strike some infernal bargain she will no doubt rue.

She's not one-tenth ruthless or powerful enough to deal with the kinds of fiends she's likely to make contact with in her researches.

Likewise, despite being a bright woman, she may display astoundingly bad judgment on whom she may recruit to aid her in her vengeance. She desperately wants to track down the one(s) who did this to her and either extract a cure or a pound of flesh, or perhaps both. She might hire a superhuman bounty hunter or even assassin to do her dirty work for her, and this could end up being someone like the Aquanaut, Caleb the Hunter or even the Tallahassee Torch (see *More Bad Guys* by PBW), wooing them with lavish per diems and promises that helping her will get them an "in" with the celebrity culture of which she used to be a member. She might also use mercenary villains to "stage" some sort of super-battle to try and frighten the public into demanding a federal crack-down on super-beings. Needless to say, such a situation would quickly spiral out of control. Note: the GM should feel free to use any appropriate, low or mid-level "thug" super-criminals of their own in such a scenario—a sample such "work for hire" villain is provided below (see **Lash Lightning**).

Note: Angelica De Lynn originally appeared in the PBW release *A Promise of Purgatory*, where Professor Purgatory was the madman responsible for her transformation (check it out if you want her full back story, as well as a dynamite adventure for your campaign).

Appearance and Demeanor

Before her unkind transformation at the hands of a rogue superhuman, Angelica De Lynn was an absolutely lovely young woman in her very early thirties. She had delicate features, with strawberry-blond hair, green eyes, full heart-shaped lips, and milky-white skin. She had a slender, toned, but still curvy and well-endowed frame, a body that graced the cover of nearly every entertainment publication and upscale men's magazine in the country. She now sports a massive, almost comically pear-shaped 430+ lbs physique, with the flabby musculature of a lifelong couch potato. She retains her beautiful face, hair, and skin,

and can still be quite attractive to those capable of looking past her size (or those few who actually prefer larger partners).

Since her change, she has made few appearances in public undisguised, as she does not care for the tabloid headlines that accompany any sighting of her. When she needs to venture out she typically dons a black wig, sunglasses, and the kind of frumpy, “Big Box” department store clothes associated with working class fat women. This simple disguise proves surprisingly effective.

If the GM for some reasons wants stats for a slim Angelica, they are provided below:

Angelica De Lynn (in her thin state)

PL: 2

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 14 (+2)

Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 18 (+4)

Initiative: +1 **Attack Bonus:** +2

Defense: +2

Toughness Save: +2 **Fortitude Save:** +2

Reflexes Save: +5 **Willpower Save:** +1

Skills: Bluff 5 (+9), Diplomacy 3 (+7), Knowledge (popular culture) 8 (+9), Knowledge (current events) 3 (+4), Notice 3 (+4), Performance 5 (acting) (+9), Profession

(model) 8 (+9), Sense Motive 2 (+3)

Feats: Attractive 2 (+8), Connected, Benefit 4 (celebrity status, wealth +3), Fascinate (Performance), Minions 8 (five 90 pp bodyguards).

Complications: Celebrity, hounded by the press wherever she goes.

An Adventure with Angelica DeLynn

The Word That Folded Itself

While perusing her newfound tome, Angelica stumbles across a glyph that the book calls: The Word That Folds/Contains/Is Itself. She speaks the Word aloud, and havoc ensues. Once unleashed the word contaminates the closest big collection of words it can find—the library of a nearby prep school.

The Townsend Academy is a popular place for the Hollywood and Beverly Hills elite to send their wayward sons. Not many of them read for pleasure, but every

one who does read any books from the school library uncovers the secret of the Word. Havoc shortly ensues. For it is the power of the Word to unlock the power of other words. Under its influence “Spatula” can levitate a truck, “Mulching” can strike a man dead and “Splavine” can transform anything made of metal into salt. There are hundreds more such effects. Nearly every word has some hidden power.

Almost all the powers unlocked by the book are offensive in nature. They tend to be PL 3-5 Blasts, Drains, Snares, and Dazzles but there are weirder effects, too. None of them ever contains any defensive powers.

Soon the sons of some of California's richest families are firing off effects at random, unaware that they're doing it by talking, blowing holes in the walls and setting things on fire. The panic spreads out into the street as they flee the building and it seems almost inevitable that someone is going to get killed and a lot of people are going to get sued. An Arcane Lore Check vs. Dc 20 identifies what the problem is. A Check vs. DC 25 reveals two separate ways to stop it. The Word is vulnerable to mental attacks. A Mental Blast or Mind Control attack vs. DC 30 will make it go away and neutralize the powers it has granted the kids. But since most PCs won't be up to this, they might want to try the other way. If they can locate the person who invoked the Word and get them to say it backwards, the effect will be neutralized. Magical Awareness will reveal where the spell came from—the estate just up the hill.

Any PC with Telepathy could also ask the Word who spoke it, and it sees no reason not to tell them (the Word isn't malevolent, but it can't stop the chaos by itself and doesn't mind telling the PCs how to do it).

Unfortunately, Angelica is not willing to try saying the Word again. She got scared last time and doesn't feel up to it. She also doesn't like or trust superheroes, and if they try breaking into her home her “security consultant” Lash Lightning will attempt to beat them up and throw them out.

Lash Lightning



PL: 9

Real Identity: Zack Bram

Dual Identity: Known to police and FBI.

Group Affiliation: Can be hired to join most any villain team or organization.

Nationality: American

Height: 6'2"

Weight: 225pounds

Hair Color: Black

Eye Color: Brown

Age: 28

Str: 18/28 (+4/+9) **Dex:** 12 (+1)
Con: 16 (+3) **Int:** 10 (+0) **Wis:** 8 (+0)
Cha: 12 (1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 11
Defense: 7 **Toughness Save:** 9
Fortitude Save: 9 **Reflexes Save:** 5
Willpower Save: -1

Skills: Knowledge (popular culture) 2 (+2), Intimidate 6 (+7), Knowledge (current events) 2 (+2), Knowledge (streetwise) 6 (+6), Stealth 8 (+9).

Feats: Attack Specialization 1(magic lightning lash), Benefit (Above the Law—very difficult to indict or convict), Chokehold, Improved Grab, Power Attack.

Powers: Device 6 (God-Blessed Helm, Hard to Lose, 30 power points, Helm grants the following powers: Concealment 2 [from normal sight]; Flaw: passive—ends after making an attack, Immunity 10 [fire and electricity attacks], Impervious 8 on Toughness Save, Super-Speed 2 [20 MPH, +8 Initiative]), Device 8 (Storm-Gauntlets, Hard to Lose, power points, Gauntlets grant the following powers: Blast [magic lightning lash] 9; Extra: Concentration; AP: Blast [chain lightning] 9; Extras: Area Effect—shapeable, Selective; Flaw: No Range; Extra:

Area Effect—explosion, Enhanced Str 10, Super-Strength 5 [max load 3,200 lb]; AP: thunderclap 9), Storm-Brewed Fury: Boost 2 (multiple magic-based powers all at once—enhances Blast, Super-Speed, and Super-Strength; Power Feat: Slow Fade 2—Boost lasts full minute; Flaws: Personal—boost self only, Unreliable—fails on a roll of 10 or less; Extra: Linked Powers—Enhanced Feat: Improved Critical 2 on punch, Enhanced Feat: Rage 2 [+4 Strength, +2 Fortitude and Will saves, -2 Defense, duration one minute], and Impervious Protection 2).

Note: When Lash Lightning's Storm Brewed Fury is active he exceeds the damage limit and toughness save normally permitted for a PL 9 character—consider him to have a "Special NPC exemption". The GM should use feel free to use this ability to surprise overconfident heroes who consider Lash overmatched against them, having the power fail whenever the GM decides its' time for the heroes to end the fight. Also note that only Lash has the ability to enhance the magic of the helm and gauntlets in this way—the trait is not part of either device.

Complications: Delusions of Grandeur, Short Attention Span

Drawbacks: Power Loss (when immersed in water), Vulnerable (moderate vulnerability to water-based attacks), Total: -2 points.

Background and History

Zack Bram was a low-level thug going nowhere fast. Never terribly sharp, the best he could seem to do in his criminal career was serving as muscle for a small-time loan shark, "leaning" on late-paying customers to make sure they came clean with his boss' cash. When there wasn't enough of this work available, he occupied his time with small-time break-ins and burglaries. He never considered going straight; Zack figured that path was for people too gutless to just take what they wanted in life.

Zack didn't often get what he wanted either, but he kept telling himself he would get a big break if he just hung in long enough. He knew he was special—he had gotten caught more than once dead to rights, but something always happened that ended up with him going free—evidence was

lost, the police forgot to read him his rights, witnesses screwed up their testimony on the witness stand—he always got a break. Zack believed this meant that fate had singled him out to do something great.

Zack finally got his big break just when things seemed bleakest for him. The loan shark he worked for got put away, his latest skanky girlfriend had broken up with him *after* stealing all his burglary tools from his apartment, and he was facing eviction for back-rent. Forgoing his convictions, he found honest work as a laborer, toiling to put up a mansion that some big-shot antiques (whatever that meant) dealer was putting up in the nice section of town. Sensing an opportunity, Zack carefully observed the layout of the house as it went up; he figured out the best way to hit the place after it was completed.

Borrowing a set of tools from another street punk acquaintance, Zack nailed the place right after the owner had finished moving in his possessions, before the security system was even operable. Barely recognizing the value of most of the objects in the mansion, he was drawn to an archaic helmet and a pair of armored gauntlets. Making off with a small cache of loot, he made his way back to his apartment, where he donned the items on an impulse. His mediocre existence changed forever.

The helmet and gauntlets were enchanted—created by a Celtic godling or storm giant for some legendary Irish hero or some such—Zack researched this at the town library, but never quite got that matter straight—he never really cared much anyway. What he did care about was that the incredible powers the God Blessed Helm and Storm Gauntlets gave him. Dubbing himself Lash Lightning after the gauntlets signature power (whip-like streams of lightning that wrap around their targets), he set off to make a name in the super-villain game.

He hasn't had much luck so far. He's basically still just a low-rent skell—just a super-powered one. He takes on jobs for hire with the mob or more established villains, stages the occasional bank robbery, and works as an enforcer for less-than-legit employers. The last is what he does for Angelica De Lynn. He was between jobs

and low on money when he spotted an ad she was running in an underground newsletter that catered to super-types like him searching for employment. Zack wasn't sure what to make of Angelica at first, he'd never even seen any of the movies she'd made back when she was hot, but he figured a job was a job. The work has been surprisingly easy—mostly bodyguard duties and a bit of muscle work when someone is giving her a hard time about books or scrolls or whatever else she needs. He's come to enjoy working for “the big lady”, as he calls her, to the extent that he'll rough up anyone he ever hears make a crack about her weight.

Appearance and Demeanor

Zack is 28 years old, 6' 2" tall, and 225 lbs of raw-boned muscle. Other than his muscular build he is of basically average appearance, with brown eyes and short brown hair. In his alter-ego as Lash Lightning, he wears his enchanted helm and gauntlets along with a black-and-silver costume with a lightning bolt motif

Lash Lightning still believes he has a big destiny ahead of him. He's tangled with super-heroes a few times, and while he has been captured more than once, his good luck has held. He's still always managed to get off scot-free in court. He brags about this constantly, fancying himself basically untouchable by the law.

Zack has his good points—he's no killer, he's not cruel or sadistic, he likes kids (even if he doesn't have much patience around them), and he's loyal (though maybe only because he's not imaginative enough to betray his employer). Still, he's basically a man who has dedicated his life to getting what he wants the “easy” way, i.e. through bullying, stealing, and beating other people up. He's not really dim-witted, but he disdains book learning and lengthy conversation, his only interests besides crime consisting of sports and women.

He really enjoys his current employment with Ms. De Lynn—even as large as she is, she dresses better, talks better, and has more class than any other woman he's ever spent any length of time with, including his mother and sister. She's

even still kind of pretty, if he scrunches up his eyes enough when he looks at her. Nice digs, good food, and no messing around with super-heroes. He really likes the pay and perks that go along working for her, and figures that if she ever does get her looks back he might even have a shot. He's completely wrong, of course.

An Adventure With Lash Lightning

Nonesuch

The one problem his new employment has presented is that Zack now has too much down time—he's not constantly scrabbling for money or striving for the next rung on the criminal ladder. But he doesn't really know what to do with his time—he has no real hobbies or plans, aside from pumping iron, watching sports, and trying to score with trashy women. He's not terribly sharp, but he's beginning to realize how banal his life is and how gaining super-powers hasn't really changed much. Is it possible there should be more to his life than being a mook?

Lash Lightning isn't terribly curious by nature, but even he has wondered from time to time about the man from whom he stole the helmet and gauntlets that give him his powers—the man never reported a break-in at his home, never showed up at any of Zack's many court arraignments to lay claim to the items, never posted any sort of reward for their return. For awhile Lash guessed that maybe the man whose house he robbed was a super-villain or crime lord or some such himself, and that the reason he hadn't ever shown up to press charges any of the times Zack was in police custody was because the helmet and gloves were already stolen. This worried him a bit, because Lash figured that if this was the case, the guy might be gunning for him to get the magical objects back, might even have a mob hit put out on him. But so far as Lash could tell from talking from his underworld contacts, the items had never been reported stolen from anywhere—they hadn't even been thought to actually exist before Zack got his hands on them and no one had any info on the owner of the house—one "Mr. Nonesuch"—a name even Zack knows had to be a put-on. As far as

Lash has been able to tell, the man simply showed up out of nowhere one day, had the mansion that Lash broke into built, stayed in the city a few months after that, and then vanished almost as quickly as he had come. It still preys on Zack's mind occasionally, but he doesn't spend much time thinking about it anymore.

The truth of the matter is that "Mr. Nonesuch" is actually named Adam Pryor, and he is a minor godling, distant kin of the Irish deity Rhiannon. His only genuine divine power is immortality, but he believes that this may soon change. His researches have led him to believe that his fortune is tied to the bearer of the God-Blessed Helm and the Storm-Gauntlets. Adam Pryor believes that Zack Bram is a direct descendent of the original Celtic hero for whom the objects were forged—and that Lash Lightning was meant to wield the items in the modern day. Prophecies that the godling has come across suggest that the divine power latent his blood will be ignited once Lash has succeeded in some great task in which the first bearer of the helmet and gauntlets failed. The texts that Pryor has studied seem to mention the hero lifting a curse from the head of "fair princess, grown heavy from her woe"—which he takes as a reference to Angelica De Lynn.

Whether his sources prove to be accurate remains to be seen, but Adam Pryor continues to observe Lash Lightning's exploits, infrequently attempting to manipulate events to try and nudge the prophecies further along. He hopes to fulfill what was foretold in the texts by awakening Zack's still untapped mystic potential and bringing Zack and Angelica together romantically, as was also prophesied. Unfortunately, he is frequently stymied in these attempts by Lash's own obliviousness and Angelica's self-absorption, but as an immortal he always has plenty of time to try and try again.

Angelica's Security Team (Unique Security Solutions)

The Unique Security Solutions Agency is an elite firm that specializes in meeting the security needs of the rich and famous, the USS Agency staff takes pride in being able to supply personnel with the experience, skills, and special abilities needed to handle even extraordinary security situations. Based in Washington, D.C., USS was founded roughly fifteen years ago by Stephen Royce, who was formerly the Atlanta-based superhero known as Blazing Glory. The company has prospered under the expert guidance of Mr. Royce and his no-nonsense VP and second-in-command Mrs. Deidre Ambridge-Sloan, developing into one of the most in-demand security providers in North America. Ms. Ambridge-Sloan has a remarkable eye for spotting talent, and has personally recruited some of the agency's real superstars. Many of the company's staff have exceptional talents and a few possess genuine super-powers, but USS does not currently have any high-powered paranormals under contract, as it is Mr. Royce's experience that they tend to not work well in a corporate structure. The company does hire super-heroes on a freelance basis for clients whose needs demand such the presence of such individuals.

Five USS staffers are currently contracted on behalf of Angelica De Lynn. Lash Lightning has no association with the agency and was brought in independently by Ms. De Lynn. The USS personnel have little but disdain for him, tolerating his presence but amongst themselves they deride him as nothing more than a crude thug-for-hire.

Generic Security Goon

PL: 6

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 6 **Defense:** 6
Toughness Save: 4 (1 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 4
Reflexes Save: 5 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Drive 3 (+4), Intimidate 4 (+5), Medicine 2 (+3), Knowledge (Tactics) +4

(+4), Notice 6 (+7), Profession (bodyguard) 4 (+4), Sense Motive 5 (+6), Stealth 5 (+6)

Feats: Assessment, Chokehold, Equipment 3 (15 pts. of equipment), Interpose, Weapon Bind

Typical Equipment: Comm-Link, Heavy Pistol (Blast 4), Taser (Stun 5), Undercover Vest (Protection 3), and an additional 5 pts in appropriate gear.

Individual Guards

But why should security guards be faceless, interchangeable mooks? Here are individual write-ups and backgrounds for all six members of Unique Security Solutions

Eileen Kowalski-Wright

PL: 6

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 5 **Defense:** 7
Toughness Save: 4 (1 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 4
Reflexes Save: 5 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Bluff 5 (+7), Diplomacy 5 (+7), Drive 4 (+5), Gather Information 4 (+6), Intimidate 4 (+6), Investigate 5 (+8), Medicine 2 (+3), Knowledge (Tactics) +4 (+4), Notice 6 (+7), Profession (bodyguard) 4 (+4), Sense Motive 9 (+12), Stealth 6 (+7)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Assessment, Chokehold, Equipment 6, Improved Disarm, Instant Up, Interpose, Master Plan, Precise Shot, Set-Up, Quick Draw, Weapon Bind.

Typical Equipment: Comm-Link, Heavy Pistol (Blast 4), Taser (Stun 5), Undercover Vest (Protection 3), and an additional 5 pts in appropriate gear.

Background and History

As one of Unique Security Solutions most experienced professionals, Eileen Kowalski-Wright is heads up Angelica De Lynn's security detail. A twenty-five year veteran of the Los Angeles police department with multiple citations for outstanding performance, Eileen retired while still a relatively young woman and was enjoying a comfortable life as the suburban wife of a successful building contractor when her husband Herman was diagnosed with Lou Gering's Disease. The financial stress of her husband's mounting medical bills, having

two daughters in college, and the second mortgage on her house forced Eileen to return to the workforce. Circumstances being what they were, she chose to seek work in the far more lucrative private security sector over a return to public service. She was snapped up by the burgeoning USS agency, which was looking for a highly credentialed pro to head up their fledgling Los Angeles office.

Appearance and Demeanor

Eileen is a 53 year old woman of medium height and build. She is fair-haired and fair-skinned, with green eyes and a smattering of freckles. Though obviously of middle years, she remains reasonably fit, and retains the sharp eyesight and quick reflexes that saw her through countless risky situations she encountered while on the force. Eileen's one only limitation is her prosthetic left leg, the result of a shotgun blast from a bank robber almost fifteen years ago; the shot shattered the bones in her leg from the knee down, necessitating its' amputation.

Eileen has all the qualities one would expect from a woman with her resume. She's alert, brave, and cool under pressure. She can also be heavy-handed and insensitive; she believes that any personal problems should be put aside when one is on the job. She insists that those working under her behave professionally at all times.

Eileen has recently betrayed her own standards, however, by engaging in a passionate affair with her subordinate on the team Hector Sandoval. Eileen still loves her husband, but under the stress of her work and his illness she has succumbed to the temptation of her feelings for Hector. She would go to considerable lengths to avoid her family from ever discovering her betrayal.

Hector Sandoval

PL: 7

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 10 (+0) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 12 (+1)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 9 **Defense:** 7
Toughness Save: 6 (3 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 5

Reflexes Save: 7 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Drive 3 (+4), Intimidate 4 (+5), Medicine 2 (+3), Knowledge (Arcane Lore) 4 (+4), Knowledge (Tactics) 4 (+4), Notice 6 (+7), Profession (bodyguard) 4 (+4), Stealth 6 (+7), Survival 7 (+8)

Feats: Accurate Attack, Critical Strike, Endurance, Equipment 6, Favored Opponent (vampires), Favored Opponents (were-wolves), Fearless, Seize Initiative, Teamwork, Track

Typical Equipment: Comm-Link, Heavy Pistol (Blast 4), Taser (Stun 5), Undercover Vest (Protection 3), and an additional 5 pts in appropriate gear.

Background and History

A recent USS Agency recruit, Hector is the youngest member of Ms. De Lynn's security team. A former marine, Hector is the most aggressive and gung-ho of the team, always ready for trouble and eager to spring into action. He is not inclined to back down from any fight, even when facing off against superhuman opposition. His teammates occasionally have to step in and cool him off in touchy situations that call for discretion, not confrontation.

Hector joined the Marine Corps right out of high school, not only because of the pay and benefits it offered a young man from a Puerto Rico barrio but because out of patriotism and love of country. His older cousin Emil had served as a marine and Hector hoped to continue in that proud decision. Two years into his enlistment, America was hit by 9/11, and Hector soon saw action in the Middle East. He served two tours apiece in Afghanistan and in Iraq. He proved to be an outstanding soldier, earning several decorations for bravery in combat.

In late 2004 Hector and his squad encountered a tribe of Middle-Eastern ghouls that had been preying on Iraqi civilians that had been driven out Baghdad by the continuing violence. While his men were initially caught off-guard and in danger of being overrun by the monsters, Hector kept his head and started killing monsters. His men rallied around him and they hunted down and exterminated every last ghoul.

Following the reports of his performance in this mission, the federal government tapped him for service in Operation X, the clandestine military initiative targeting vampires and other supernatural creatures (or use an equivalent organization from your own campaign). Hector excelled as a field agent. He was successful in destroying several vampire nests, a clan of outlaw biker werewolves, and a murderous living mannequin that was terrorizing New York City's So-Ho district. Given his impressive performance, his superiors were surprised when he declined to re-enlist, instead choosing to sign on with Unique Security Solutions, which had been recruiting him heavily. The truth was that as much as Hector loved serving his country, he put his family first, and he knew that the lifespan of the average Operation X field agent was measured in months or years, never decades.

Hector has a live-in girlfriend (his high school sweetheart) and two young children. He plans on marrying Anita as soon as he has enough money put away to pay for a house and a proper church wedding. But despite his devotion to Anita, Hector has never been entirely faithful, having cheated on her several times during his deployments overseas. He recently became involved with his supervisor, Eileen Kowalski-Wright, a relationship he knows puts a lot at risk for both of them.

Appearance and Demeanor

Aggressive, tough, and gung-ho while on the job, Hector is actually rather quiet when not on duty; he rarely drinks alcohol, never uses recreational drugs, and doesn't go looking for fights. He has a soft-spoken romantic charm around women, and is generous and kind when dealing with children, particularly his own. He has an almost visceral hatred for daemons, vampires, and like monsters, having seen the kind of atrocities they commit against innocent human beings.

Hector is about 5'9 ½" tall and weighs 190 lbs, most of it hard-packed, sinewy muscle. He has close-cropped black hair, black eyes, and swarthy skin that is

adorned with several tattoos—some of which serve to deter supernatural beings.

Kristy Walls

PL: 6

Str: 21 (+5) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 18 (+4)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 5 (7 melee)
Defense: 6
Toughness Save: 6 (4 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 6
Reflexes Save: 2 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Climb 3 (+8), Drive 4 (+5), Intimidate 7 (+9), Medicine 3 (+6), Notice 3 (+5), Profession (bodyguard) 5 (+7), Profession (personal trainer) 5 (+7), Sense Motive 3 (+5)

Feats: Attack Focus (Melee) 2, Equipment 6, Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Interpose, Power Attack, Ultimate Effort (Strength checks), Startle

Powers: Immovable 1 (Extra: Unstoppable), Leaping 1, Super-Strength 1

Typical Equipment: Comm-Link, Heavy Pistol (Blast 4), Taser (Stun 5), Undercover Vest (Protection 2), and an additional 5 pts in appropriate gear.

Background and History

Kristy Walls is a minor celebrity, well-known in the iron-pumping world as one of the strongest non-paranormal women on the planet. A world-champion female power-lifter and two-time Met-EFX World's Strongest Woman competition champion, Kristy parlayed her impressive physical presence into a minor career in Hollywood as a character actress in TV and B-movies. As acting roles for a woman of her size and physique were relatively few, she began moonlighting as a bodyguard for various celebrities. Her intimidating appearance compensated for her relatively unimpressive security credentials, as her looming height and out-sized musculature were enough to frighten off any but the most psychotic of celebrity stalkers and nearly all of the paparazzi. Her cheerful, easygoing manner, combined with the sheer novelty of having a female bodyguard helped land her gigs, and she was soon very much in-demand among the rich and famous.

Her Hollywood contacts were the primary reason Kristy was recruited by Unique Security Solutions—she brought a number of former clients with her to the agency. Her physical assets were the other reason the agency signed her to a contract. Although no real match for a genuine super-being, Kristy's obvious strength and sheer mass are reassuring to the clients she is assigned to protect.

Appearance and Demeanor

A large, massively built woman, Kristy stands 6'3" and weighs 270 lbs. She has thick, slightly curly brown hair and brown eyes. Her otherwise attractive facial features show the unfortunate side-effects of years of anabolic steroid use, which have thickened her nose and swollen her jaw. Despite her less-than feminine appearance, Kristy is very much a "girly-girl" in her private life, rarely leaving her house without doing her makeup and styling her hair, even when going to the gym. While on the job she dresses in appropriate business attire, typically button-down dark business suits that tend to make her look somewhat "butch." She dislikes this, but accepts as part of the job. The security team has sometimes used her more masculine looks to their advantage on a couple of occasions where Angela needed to go out in public without attracting attention by being surrounded by bodyguards—they had Kristy travel alone with Angelica, with the two posing as an unattractive lesbian couple. This isn't something that Kristy enjoys doing, as she is very much straight and resents any implication to the contrary.

Malcolm Deckerd

PL: 6

Str: 12 (+1) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 10 (+0)
Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 4 **Defense:** 7
Toughness Save: 3 (0 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 0
Reflexes Save: 1
Willpower Save: 3 (9 vs. psychic attack)

Skills: Bluff 4 (+4), Concentration 6 (+8), Computers 9 (+12), Craft (electronic) 9 (+12), Craft (mechanical) 9 (+12), Disable Device 9 (+12), Knowledge (Physical

Sciences) 7 (+10), Knowledge (Technology) 9 (+12), Notice 5 (+7), Profession (security systems designer) 9 (+12), Search 6 (+8)

Feats: Improvised Tools, Inventor, Master Plan, Second Chance (Disable Device), Skill Mastery (Computers, Craft, Disable Device, Knowledge [Technology]), Well-Informed

Typical Equipment: Comm-Link, Taser (Stun 5), Undercover Vest (Protection 3), Anti-Metahuman Field Generator (Drain [Mutant and Psychic Powers] 6; Extra: Range), EMP Projector (Drain [Mechanical and Electromagnetic Powers] 6; Extra: Range), Anti-Psi Screen (Mind-Shield 6)

Background and History

A young African-American technical wizard, Malcolm is in charge of designing and implementing whatever hi-tech security measures a client requires. He prefers not to get his hands dirty with combat, but has come up with a few specialized gadgets especially to deal with super-powered opponents. Malcolm is a third-generation scientist. Both of his parents are professors and they wonder why he hasn't settled down, gotten his PhD and joined the teaching staff of one university or another. Perhaps he will, but for now he's having too much fun.

Appearance and Demeanor

Malcolm is good-looking but he lacks social skills. Arrogant and impatient, he has no time for anyone who isn't as smart as he is and he doesn't mind letting people know it. Then he wonders why he's always watching TV alone on Saturday night.

Dark-skinned, he has no trace of an African-American accent. He listens to classical music and thinks that people who don't are stupid. He is presently single, which surprises no one who spends much time with him.

Malcolm is not strictly honest—he enjoys pulling small scams like using his technical skills to get free cable, view internet pay sites without being charged, and even to rig arcade games and vending machines, on occasion. He's also willing to deal in illegal, black-market tech.

Donna Hopewell

PL: 6

Str: 14 (+2) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 12 (+1) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 6 **Defense:** 6
Toughness Save: 4 (1 without body armor) **Fortitude Save:** 4
Reflexes Save: 5 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Bluff 3 (+5), Climb 4 (+6), Disable Device 6 (+7), Drive 3 (+4), Intimidate 4 (+6), Notice 6 (+7), Profession (bodyguard) 2 (+3), Profession (personal trainer) 5 (+6), Sense Motive 6 (+7), Stealth 5 (+6)

Feats: Equipment 3 (15 pts. of equipment)

Powers: Super-Senses 2 (Danger Sense, Detect Living Being), Telekinisis 1 (Effective Strength: 5; Power Feat: Precise)

Typical Equipment: Comm-Link, Heavy Pistol (Blast 4), Taser (Stun 5), Undercover Vest (Protection 3), and an additional 5 pts in appropriate gear.

Background and History

Donna Hopewell used to be a super-hero who went by the name "Dominique". She was briefly a media star, as much for her sleek beauty and fashion sense as her heroic exploits. Her career ended when she was diagnosed with a brain tumor; the surgery necessary to remove the tumor also excised the part of her brain that controlled her powers. As the limelight faded, she sank into depression and drug abuse.

After nearly seven years of spiraling downward, Donna finally hit bottom—and began rebuilding her life. After successfully completing rehab, she began a strict diet and exercise regime to rebuild her physique, eventually becoming a certified personal trainer and fitness competitor. Her entry into the security field was almost accidental. She was visiting Atlanta when she ran into Stephen Royce, whom she knew from his superhero days as Blazing Glory. They struck up a conversation and Royce offered her a job on a probational basis. So far her performance has not disappointed him.

The surgeon's knife didn't quite scrape away all her powers; she still retains a little telekinesis (enough to yank a gun out of someone's hand or pick a lock) and telepathy (enough to detect intruders in close proximity). She may have overcome

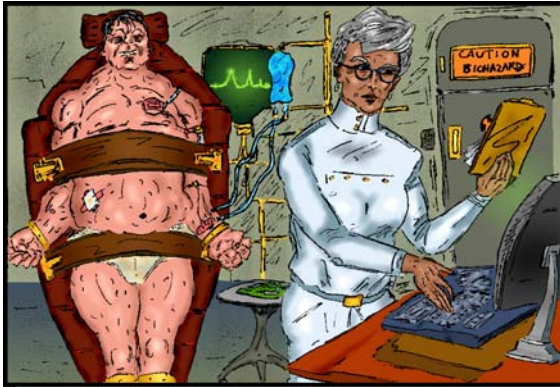
some of her personality problems but she's still kind of shallow and vain, and has undergone several cosmetic surgeries to enhance her appearance. Donna is very interested in the magical book that Angelica De Lynn possesses, wondering if it could restore her former abilities.

Appearance and Demeanor

A natural southern California blonde with an artificial, unwavering smile. Donna is either a well-preserved thirty-five or a hard-living girl in her late twenties. The truth is somewhere in between. She dresses conservatively on the job, but always with tremendous style. Her earrings are always coordinated with her watch, her sport jacket with her shoes. It's impossible to imagine her in sweatpants, despite the fact that she moonlights as a personal trainer.

Friendly and forward in a blank, hollow kind of way that many people associate with California, she will remain smiling and polite even while she is searching someone or roughing them up. Her temper does however have its limits, and when she loses it—watch out!

Dr. Nathalia Noble



PL: 6

Real Identity: Same

Dual Identity: N/A

Group Affiliation: US

Government/Paranormal Defense Initiative.

Nationality: American

Height: 5'9 1/2" (5' 11" tall in prime)

Weight: 158 lbs (145 lbs in prime)

Hair Color: White (formerly Auburn)

Eye Color: Grey with copper-colored flecks.

Age: 93

Str: 9 (-1) **Dex:** 12 (+1) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 28 (+9) **Wis:** 21 (+5) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 4
Defense: 8 **Toughness Save:** 6
Fortitude Save: 6 **Reflexes Save:** 6
Willpower Save: 10

Skills: Computers 6 (+15), Craft (electronic) 6 (+15), Craft (mechanical) 6 (+15), Craft (pharmaceutical) 11 (+20), Diplomacy 3 (+6), Disable Device 3 (+12), Knowledge (behavioral sciences) 11 (+20), Knowledge (current events) 4 (+11), Knowledge (Earth and life sciences) 11 (+20), Knowledge (physical sciences) 6 (+15), Knowledge (technology) 6 (+15), Investigate 6 (+15), Language 5 (French, German, Italian, Japanese, Latin), Medicine 9 (+18), Notice 6 (+11), Profession (scientist) 8 (+13), Sense Motive 6 (+11),

Feats: Attractive 1 (+4), Connected, Benefit 4 (security clearance, wealth 3), Eidetic Memory, Equipment 25 (125 points worth—usually maintains 50 points in a laboratory HQ and another 25 points in a customized vehicle of some sort), Improvised Tools, Jack-of-All-Trades, Skill Mastery (applies to Craft [pharmaceutical], Knowledge [behavioral sciences], Knowledge [Earth and

life sciences], and Medicine), **Powers:** Mind Shield 6, Quickness 2 (Flaw: One type—mental tasks only).

Complications: Determined to revive the Noble family lineage, Performs unethical experiments on paranormals.

Drawback: Disability (advanced age has diminished her reflexes and stamina—she suffer a -2 penalty on reflex saves and a -4 penalty on Con checks made to resist fatigue due to all-out movement or Swimming). Total: -2 points.

Background and History

Dr. Nathalia Noble is one of the last surviving members of the once renowned Noble clan, a line that produced several generations of geniuses and heroes. The Nobles were descended from one of the families present at the so-called “Coopers-Smith Meteor Strike” event that occurred near the end of the eighteenth century. An odd meteorite came down in the small mid-western town of Coopers-Smith, subjecting those in the immediate vicinity to a brief flash of intense radiation. This anomalous radiation somehow caused numerous beneficial alterations in the DNA of those exposed, mutations that manifested themselves in the mental and physical attributes of their descendants. While none of their offspring developed genuine super-powers as a result, almost all evidenced exceptional intelligence, strength, and health. Many noted figures of the past two centuries owed their abilities to the Coopers-Smith event. The genetic heritage of the Noble family was particularly rich, with each successive generation seemingly more blessed than the last.

Nathalie's career as so-called “mystery woman” began in 1935 at the age of 21. She was following in the footsteps of her father Alexander, who had been one of the “great detectives” of the previous generation, before settling down to establish his practice as a world-famous psychiatrist and criminologist. She made her debut just two years after her older cousin Anton, the fabled “Man of 1,001 Talents”. Nathalia was one of the few independent female crime-busters of the Pulp Era, and her exploits always got a lot of good (if sometimes

condescending) press. Despite her penchant for operating alone, she loved the times when she teamed up with her cousin to go after this crime lord or other. One of the saddest days of her life was when Anton was murdered by Professor Purgatory. This began the vendetta the Nobles have pursued against Purgatory to the present day.

Dr. Noble's crime fighting days came to an end in 1953, when she was recruited as an operative by the federal government. The Cold War between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. was in full swing, with both nations striving for military and scientific superiority. While the U.S. had the advantage in entrepreneurship, the free trade of information, and industrial capacity, Mother Russia has the mega-genius Citizen VI (see *More Bad Guys*, or substitute your own ultra-intelligent communist mastermind) and his Science Cities. To counter Citizen VI, the U.S. brought together a team of scientific visionaries under the auspices of Operation S, the agency that would later evolve into the Paranormal Defense Initiative. The members of Operation S were given basically unlimited funding and free reign to indulge their theories, all in the name of national security.

Nathalia poured her heart and soul into her new role—she was a staunch patriot and ardent anti-communist. She considered the work she was doing for her government far more meaningful than her previous crime-fighting efforts. She devoted herself to helping protect her country from the threat posed by expansionist Soviet and Red Chinese communism. Initially hopeful that the U.S. could win the Cold War within ten years, she became increasingly pessimistic as years and then decades went by with America managing a stalemate against communism at best—and failing horribly in places such as Vietnam at worst. Fearful of the eventual outcome, she drove herself harder and harder, re-doubling her efforts, working twelve to fourteen hour days six days a week.

Dr. Noble's specialty was superhuman psychology and physiology. She had grown especially concerned about the possible threats posed by super-humans

loyal to the communist cause. She was all too aware of the various Soviet super-soldier experiments and the nascent Perfect Battalion project in Red China. Dr. Noble wasn't so concerned about the showy, flashy would-be world conqueror super-beings that seemed to arise every few months or years. They tended to focus overwhelmingly on taking on whatever superhero or super-team they perceived as being the world's defenders—and inevitably got their heads handed to them. No, she was concerned about the kind of stealthy, living weapons of mass destruction the enemy might be developing, the type that could cause hundreds of thousands or even millions of civilian casualties.

In an effort to develop effective countermeasures against such beings, Nathalia started crossing the lines of medical ethics. She began making deals with super-powered federal prisoners, arranging for reductions in their sentences if they agreed to supply tissue samples, participate in her tests, or submit themselves to experiments designed to erase their anti-social tendencies, neutralize their powers, or otherwise render them harmless. Few of those who agreed understood what they were getting into, and many lived to regret it. While she had a few successes, her research more often resulted in permanent harm or (in at least two instances) death. She rationalized that she hadn't forced the prisoners to participate, and they had signed waivers testifying to their informed consent.

Dr. Noble's efforts continued unabated, always pushing the envelope further, taking more risks with the health and safety of her guinea pigs. She learned to justify a great deal in the name of national security. Her work was top-secret, her results highly classified, protecting the sterling Noble reputation from any black marks. Meanwhile, each decade saw a new crop of heroic Nobles fighting the good fight in public, upholding the family name.

This all changed in the early nineties. Dr. Noble was not prepared for the end of the cold war. She had maintained that glasnost and perestroika were just ruses, and that Gorbachev was just trying to lull the West into a false sense of security. But

eventually Russia's decline and fall as a world power became obvious to everyone. Dr. Noble's protestations that Red China was still a threat fell on deaf ears—China was now an American trading partner, even given most favored nation status. Her research budget was slashed and her staff reduced to a couple of token lab assistants.

Then Nathalia's world truly came crashing down. The Noble family was decimated by Xander Moonlight, the grandson of one of Anton's most persistent foes. Moonlight enlisted the aid of many of the family's old enemies in a massive campaign to expunge the entire Noble line. He nearly succeeded in his quest, assassinating his targets one by one, killing them in pairs, murdering them *en masse*. When he was finally taken down, the ranks of the Nobles had been reduced to a mere handful. Besides Nathalia, there was her now wheelchair bound niece Andrea, and two of Andrea's grandchildren, the five year old fraternal twins Ariel and Titania. Desperate to protect her remaining family, Nathalia used her connections within the federal government to set them up with new identities and twenty four hour surveillance and security. Nothing was more important to her; the future of the Nobles lineage had to be preserved at all costs. Unwilling to potentially endanger them, Nathalia proceeded to cut all communication with her kin. For the first time in her life—the worst time in her life—she was truly alone, with no family to share her nearly overwhelming grief. But despite the dark depression she felt, she was determined to preserve the Noble family name.

Dr. Noble tracked down more distant relatives, Nobles cousins whose ancestors were not present at the time of the meteor incident (and who had therefore not been genetically enhanced); after contacting them, Nathalia used her considerable presence to persuade them to take up the Noble mantle of heroism. She did her best by for them, providing them with top-flight training and cutting-edge equipment to make up for their genetic deficits, but her efforts proved futile; her first such recruit committed suicide after his intervention in a hostage situation resulted

in several deaths, and the second was forced to retire after suffering severe burns at the hands of Dr. Scorch (see *13 Shades of Darkness*). But Nathalia remained undaunted.

The attacks on 9/11 reawakened the government to the threat of terrorism. The Bush administration had grave concerns that the next assault on U.S. soil might involve paranormal persons or weapons; it had credible evidence that Al-Queda was actively seeking to acquire superhuman assets, and the CIA believed that several rogue states and even disgruntled factions among the Russian government might be willing to provide Middle Eastern terrorists with these resources. Budget priority was given to funding PDI, and the MARS-T Project was officially established as the military applications arm of the agency. Dr. Noble was tapped to head the program, given a massive budget and an extensive staff. She was also essentially granted *carte blanche* to violate the civil liberties of any paranormals designated as “enemy combatants” by the government. While she does her best to avoid undue harm to the unwilling subjects that are delivered to her, she rationalizes that they sacrificed their human rights when they made the choice to use their powers for inhuman purposes. Her newly aggressive attitude in her experimentation has led to more “patient” casualties.

Dr. Noble has used her new position to continue her mission of restoring the Noble line. Using her access to the latest bio-tech, she has begun conducting research into gene-trait transference and cloning. She has persisted in trying to turn another member of the less fortunate family tree into a hero, this time the tangentially related Eric Noble. To better Eric's odds, she has (with his permission) attempted to enhance him through a myriad of cybernetic, pharmacological, and surgical methods. Unfortunately, Eric does not the physiology to withstand the kind of body-wide changes that would turn him into a genuine paranormal—and even the minor improvements Dr. Noble has been able to effect have had a few side-effects. But so

far Eric remains willing to go along with her attempts to craft him into a super-hero.

Appearance and Demeanor

Despite her age, Dr. Noble remains a sturdy and handsome woman, with the bearing and vigor of a lady in her late sixties, despite being nearly a quarter century older. She is 5' 9" tall, with a plume of white hair, copper-colored skin, and silver-framed glasses with thick lenses. When not wearing one of her innumerable white lab coats, she dresses in vintage clothing dating from 1940s and 1950s (which was when she stopped following fashion). Despite her age, she is vain, rarely appearing without make-up and jewelry. Though she has remained fit, she no longer possesses the physique she once did, and the youthful cut of her clothes do not flatter her figure, being too loose in some areas and too snug in others. No one who knows or works with her has the courage to broach the subject.

Dr. Noble has a patrician air, impatient and at times condescending to those less gifted than herself. Yet she clearly believes that the elite have responsibilities to the less fortunate. She is something of a social Darwinist, believing that society is best served when the most intelligent and able are in charge. However, she does respect the Constitutional principle that all human beings are guaranteed certain rights and are equal before the law—so long as they do not present a threat to the security of the United States. Rogue super-beings, particularly those engaging in terrorism, pose a unique threat, one that necessitates extreme measures to deal with effectively.

She is soft-spoken, almost never raising her voice or cursing, but has a no-nonsense tone that makes it clear to everyone that works for her that she has little use for opposing viewpoints. Adamant in her belief system, she will vigorously defend her point of view against all counter-arguments. She endlessly justifies the moral and ethical calls she has made in the course of her work—and she is not above using her wealth, reputation, and authority against those who interfere with her research.

Here are statistics for a youthful Nathalia Noble, This version of Dr. Noble represents her at the peak of her crime-fighting abilities, in her early-to-late thirties. While she brings an analytical/scientific approach to her heroism even at this age, she is much more direct and “hands-on” in her approach, leading her support team (“The Golden Age Noble Knights”) into battle with guns a-blazing. Modern day heroes might be a bit shocked by the Pulp Hero attitude she displays—Dr. Noble has few compunctions about employing lethal force against opponents who threaten her allies, friends, or innocent civilians, and little concern over legal niceties like respecting the civil rights of criminals. Getting information through beatings or threats is not out of bounds for her. If she is encountered during an adventure that involves Nazis, Fifth Columnists, or (later in the era) Communist spies, she will have no qualms about mowing them down.

At the same time, she's less hardened in her outlook at this point, and more willing to entertain the possibility of other, less drastic approaches provided they still get the job done. She's also less of a workaholic, more willing to indulge herself the pleasures of a social life; she will even occasionally indulge in a bit of bawdy fun, enjoying the rise she gets out of a society unused to a strong, independent woman. At this stage in her life, Nathalie is also not quite as polished, and is more prone to showing the snobbery she feels toward most other people.

Dr. Nathalia Noble (Golden Age)



PL: 9

Str: 13 (+1) **Dex:** 17 (+3) **Con:** 21 (+5)
Int: 25 (+7) **Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 3 **Attack Bonus:** 9
Defense: 11 **Toughness Save:** 7
Fortitude Save: 10 **Reflexes Save:** 10
Willpower Save: 10

Skills: Craft (electronic) 6 (+13), Craft (mechanical) 6 (+13), Craft (pharmaceutical) 8 (+15), Diplomacy 3 (+6), Disable Device 3 (+12), Knowledge (behavioral sciences) 8 (+15), Knowledge (current events) 4 (+11), Knowledge (Earth and life sciences) 8 (+15), Knowledge (physical sciences) 6 (+13), Knowledge (technology) 6 (+13), Investigate 6 (+13), Language 5 (French, German, Italian, Japanese, Latin), Medicine 7 (+14), Notice 6 (+11), Profession (scientist) 6 (+13), Sense Motive 6 (+11),

Feats: Attractive 1 (+4), Benefit 2 (wealth 2), Defensive Roll, Eidetic Memory, Equipment 12 (60 points worth—usually maintains 25 points in a laboratory HQ and another 15 points in a customized vehicle of some sort), Elusive Target, Improved Aim, Improved Initiative, Improvised Tools, Jack-of-All-Trades, Minions 8 (five 90 point assistants), Teamwork **Powers:** Mind Shield 3, Quickness 2 (Flaw: One type—mental tasks only).

Devices: Device 6 (Gyrojet Pistols, Easy to Lose [Blast 9; Extra: Autofire; Power Feats: Homing, Ricochet; AP: Blast 9; Extra: Penetrating]), Device (Multi-Grenades, Easy to Lose [Blast 8; Extra: Area Effect—explosion; AP: Obscure {sight}; Extra: Selective; AP: Nauseate; Extras: Area Effect, Selective; Flaw: Sicken; AP: Stun 8; Extras: Ranged, Area Effect; Flaw: Daze only;] Flaw on entire array: Unreliable—5 uses), Device 2 (Bulletproof Vest, Hard to Lose [Impervious Protection 5]).

Complications: Flaunts status as independent woman, looks down on those with more “common” ancestry.

An Adventure with Dr. Noble

Noble/Blood

The dead, of course, have no legal rights. Whether they are lying peacefully in a grave, stumbling around eating brains or dancing in Goth clubs it's all the same to the law. This makes them ideal test subjects in certain regards. There are certain intrinsic dangers in working with the undead, but Dr. Noble soon learns how to keep them under control. She is learning all kinds of fascinating things about their baffling physiology when one of them escapes.

Mary Blood (that actually her real name—see her description and stats on Page 5) is a wayward young vampress with an unhappy past. Later she may become a menace (see the adventure “Sisterhood of the Bloody Moon” on Page 9) but right now she is just a frightened kid on the run. She has heard that the PCs help people and will try to find them, with a squad of scary government agents on her trail.

Mary reaches the Player Characters just in time to tell them about a terrible mad scientist who is performing horrendous experiments on the living dead. Then a group of grim-lipped agents in dark suits appear and tell the PCs that they need to take Mary Blood into custody—she is a dangerous criminal and a threat to national security. Which side will our heroes take? Dr. Noble may be misguided, but many of the creatures she is tormenting in her lab are themselves evil—including Mary Blood.

Eric Noble, AKA Project: Paragon MK
III



PL: 8
Real Identity: Same
Dual Identity: Public Knowledge
Group Affiliation: Paranormal Defense Initiative.
Nationality: American
Height: 6'1"
Weight: 195 pounds
Hair Color: Dark Brown
Eye Color: Blue
Age: 31

Str: 14/20 (With Optimum Suit) (+2/+5)
Dex: 12 (+1) **Con:** 12 (+1) **Int:** 14 (+2)
Wis: 16 (+3) **Cha:** 14 (+2)
Initiative: 1 **Attack Bonus:** 8
Defense: 7

Toughness Save: 1/5 (With Optimum Suit)
Fortitude Save: 4 **Reflexes Save:** 6
Willpower Save: 6

Skills: Bluff 4 (+6), Diplomacy 6 (+8), Disable Device 4 (+5), Notice 5 (+8), Profession (Teacher) 7 (+8), Search 5 (+8), Sense Motive 4 (+7), Survival 4 (+7)

Feats: Accurate Attack, All-Out Attack, Connected, Improved Grapple, Power Attack

Powers: Device 8: Optimum Suit (Enhanced Strength +6), Communication [Radio, one-mile radius], Protection 5 [Impervious], Super-Senses 4 [Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Time Sense], Super-Strength 2 [Maximum Lift=3,200 pounds] Device 12 Brilliant Gun (Blast 8; Power Feat: Alternate Powers [Visual Dazzle 8, Radio Sense Dazzle 8, Paralyze 8, Stun 8])

Drawback: Normal Identity (takes a full round to don the Optimum Suit, -4 pts)

Note on Eric's Powers: Dr. Noble is forever tinkering with and altering Eric's powers. She has tried all kinds of different things at one time or another. The above stat-block is completely provisional—Paragon could have almost any set of powers when the PCs meet him (but never anything above PL 9).

Background and History

A special education teacher by training, Eric had just moved to New York City and was working as a certified personal trainer at a Gold's Gym when he was contacted by his world-renowned relative. Although Eric was aware that the two members of the "lesser" branch of the family whom Nathalia Noble had previously tapped to become the standard bearers of the legacy had not fared well, he was eager for the chance—in fact he had dreamed about being asked to become the next to step into the role.

Eric had always fantasized about becoming a super-hero. He longed for the life he imagined they enjoyed—the excitement, the glamour, and the chance to really affect the world, to help people on a much larger scale than a teacher ever could. It wasn't that Eric was particularly unhappy. In fact he found the work he did meaningful, even rewarding. But he yearned for more; to be more than merely ordinary, the

youngest child of an English teacher father and an accountant mother. He wanted to be exceptional, to really have the ability to affect the world.

Perhaps his motivation was in part due to his parents' death five years earlier in an auto accident—maybe he subconsciously wished to have the power to protect the people close to him. Maybe he felt guilty because he had fallen out of touch with his family since graduating college and striking out on his own. Or maybe he just wanted to a taste of the glory that the “fortunate” Nobles had enjoyed as their birthright.

Whatever his reasons, Eric was overjoyed when Nathalia Noble approached him about becoming a superhero—he had actually been trying to contact her, to volunteer for the position after Dane Noble was severely burned at the hands of Dr. Scorch (Eric tried not to think about that too much, as he has a healthy fear of fire); Dr. Noble was pleasantly surprised that she did not have to resort to the usual mix of heavy handed verbal persuasion and the offer of lucrative rewards.

After a thorough background check, genetic analysis, and a battery of psychiatric tests (her first Paragon Program subject, Mary-Beth Noble, had committed suicide and Nathalia had no desire to go through that whole messy business again), she was happy to forge ahead with her new charge.

There were a few immediate challenges to turning him into a paranormal (or an approximate one): Eric showed no ability as a powered armor operator; the genetic tests showed he was unlikely to survive body wide bionic augmentation or induced mutation; and he even lacked the natural combat aptitudes that Dane (a former marine with experience in Afghanistan and Iraq) had possessed. Still, Eric was bright, athletic, and incredibly motivated. He pushed past the point of exhaustion studying with the martial artists, Special Forces instructors, field technicians, and PR consultants his cousin arranged. When his multiple-PhD cousin deemed this insufficient, Eric signed the necessary waivers she asked for to proceed in her program.

Since then, Eric has endured extraordinary pain and discomfort in the pursuit of their mutual goal. He has undergone experimental surgeries to improve the efficiency of his muscular and nervous systems, begun ingesting a cocktail of restricted performance enhancing drugs, and had minor cybernetic devices implanted under his skin.

Eric has suffered numerous side-effects from these procedures, including migraine headaches, lingering residual pain, and a weakened immune system from the anti-rejection drugs required. Dr. Noble carefully oversees his medical care herself, regularly altering his drug regime or making adjustments or replacements to his implants as necessary to preserve his health. His exact capabilities vary from month to month.

Occasionally Eric has been forced to go without any sort of enhancements at all; his body simply needs the rest. To keep him viable as a superhero during these times, Dr. Noble has designed a few special pieces of equipment for him to use in a pinch. The “Optimum-Suit” maximizes his natural human abilities, though it doesn't approach exo-skeleton status, and the “Brilliant Gun” has setting that can be customized to deal with a variety of super-humans. Unfortunately, both devices are in the prototype stage, each with a few design flaws.

Eric's career so far has been a mix of triumphs and set-backs. He isn't nearly ready to take on any major super-villains, even when backed up by a squadron of federal agents, and struggles at times against even minor extra-human threats. He has proved capable enough of taking on normal criminals and handling small-scale accidents. But he has suffered serious injury more than once, and his ill-advised decision to go after Dr. Scorch resulted in his right hand being so badly scarred by fire that Nathalia had to replace most of the skin and muscle, keeping Eric out of action for six months. Still, he perseveres.

Appearance and Demeanor

A good looking young man of thirty-one, with more than a passing resemblance to a younger Luke Wilson, Eric stands 6'1” and

weights a taut 195 lbs. He is built like an athlete, not a body-builder; aside from his six-pack abs, his muscles are well-defined but not overly developed. He has sandy blonde hair, which is cut short to conceal that is starting to thin, clear blue eyes, and a broken-looking nose (an adolescent accident on the basketball court).

Eric Noble is earnest and forthright. A genuinely kind human being, Eric despises those who engage in bullying, cruelty, or sadism. He is very aware of the opportunity Dr. Noble has afforded him, and he strives to be worthy of it, to conduct himself in a manner befitting a hero. He is always ready to step up to help those in need or protect those who cannot defend themselves. Eric has thrown himself into the training regime designed by his cousin, constantly testing his limits in an attempt to transform himself into genuine hero material. He has even committed to working with a team of hand-picked cognitive psychologists to aid with his mental conditioning, to eliminate perceived "weaknesses" such as his tendency to become panicked when children are threatened, and excessively fearful and hesitant when confronted with fire—a phobia he couldn't quite overcome when going up against the pyrokinetic maniac who disabled his predecessor.

Unknown to the general public and to Dr. Noble's sponsors, Eric is gay. Since assuming the mantle of the Nobles, he has been pressured by his cousin to conceal his sexuality. While Dr. Noble is not ashamed of her nephew (though she regrets the potential "waste" of perfectly serviceable genes that should be passed on), she does not believe that homosexuality really fits the "All-American" image the Nobles have always publicly maintained—and besides, some of her more conservative government sponsors might threaten to withdraw her funding if they found out the individual she was putting forth as the next great government sanctioned hero was not straight. She might be tempted to soften her stance, if only his cousin's type was not so...common...so déclassé—Eric is attracted to blue collar worker types despite his own solidly middle class upbringing. The guys he dated seldom had college educations. While

Nathalia understands Eric isn't a true Noble, she still expects better of him.

Eric isn't at all happy about the situation, especially as he believes that he could serve as a positive gay image that could help more Americans accept others like him. Still, he knows he risks being dropped by Dr. Noble if he disobeys her edict. He has basically retreated into near-celibacy, with the occasional furtive assignation. Eric was never really "out" before, but also never made an especially effort to conceal his preferences, except to his parents, whom he was never quite able to face while they were alive. All of his former acquaintances and boyfriends who did know have been quietly contacted by Dr. Noble and given considerable incentives to remain quiet. Still, in the age of tabloid media, it is likely inevitable that the truth will eventually break as Eric's public profile continues to rise.

An Adventure With Eric Noble

A Whole New You

Dr. Noble comes up with a procedure she believes will turn Eric Noble into a true Paragon, a worthy heir to the Noble legacy. It will rewire his brain and nervous system, allowing him to tap his full human potential. But she also intends to "modify" his sexual desires while doing so, "converting" him to heterosexuality, something Eric is unaware of.

One of Dr. Noble's assistants, Terry Dane, learns of this—and is appalled, as she herself is a gay woman. Terry goes to the heroes for their assistance in preventing what she sees as a perversion of science.

The PCs have roughly three options. They can try to expose this situation to Dr. Noble's superiors, they can try to approach Eric in his civilian identity and explain the truth to him, or they can assault the lab and try to stop the experiment in progress.

If they pursue the first option, they hit a brick wall. Dr. Noble's superiors trust her and they know her methods are sometimes unorthodox. The current project falls into dubious legal territory, but then so have many of her previous successes.

Terry Dane suddenly disappears. Nothing sinister has happened to her—she's been fired for talking to the PCs and she has gone off to her Mom's house in Oregon to recuperate. She's become terribly disillusioned with the course her life has taken and anxious about her future. Caught in the grips of a deep, black depressive episode, Terry hasn't been able to find the strength to contact the PCs and explain what's happened. Of course the PCs won't know this and may very well attack PDI.

If the PCs try to talk to Eric off-duty they find that it's pretty difficult. He never seems to spend any time out of uniform. When they at last catch up with him, he reacts skeptically to their claims, but then an armed group of PDI agents breaks into the room. They're here to protect Eric from the PCs, not to capture him and drag him off to be forcibly converted, but in light of what the PCs have told him he mistakes the PDI team's intentions and attacks them.

They defend themselves and shortly the PCs and Paragon both find themselves on the run from PDI. Dr. Noble is convinced that the Player Characters are themselves gay and that they are exerting some kind of mind control over Eric.

If the PCs take the direct route and break into the lab (with or without Terry's help), the GM should arrange for them to get there at the most dramatic possible moment—just as Eric is being strapped down to the table, ready for the process to begin.

If the PCs explain why they are here, Eric will act shocked and demand to know if it's true (a little more timidly than he wants to—he's completely in awe of Dr. Noble). The Doctor does not reply, but he can see from her reaction that the PCs are telling the truth and he will fight with all his strength to get free. She is thunderstruck by his reaction and will scream feebly at him as he and the PCs punch their way to freedom. Maybe a special-ed teacher was all the hero he ever needed to be, after all.

But he's not about to get the chance to go back to being one any time soon. Dr. Noble is prepared to scour the earth for her wayward Paragon. With PDI backing her up, her reach is very, very long. Eric broke her heart, she says, but she only wants to help him...

Mr. Chiang



PL: 7

Real Identity: Possibly the same, but no one knows for sure.

Dual Identity: Does not maintain a dual identity.

Group Affiliation: None—the only side he is on is his own.

Nationality: Chinese National

Height: 5'8"

Weight: 175 pounds

Hair Color: Black (going grey)

Eye Color: Black

Age: Unknown

Str: 11 (+0) **Dex:** 20 (+5) **Con:** 20 (+5)
Int: 21 (+5) **Wis:** 30 (+10) **Cha:** 25 (+7)
Initiative: 5 **Attack Bonus:** 6 **Defense:** 9
Toughness Save: 8 **Fortitude Save:** 8
Reflexes Save: 8 **Willpower Save:** 15

Skills: Craft (artistic) 5 (+10), Diplomacy 8 (+15), Escape Artist 5 (+10), Knowledge (arcane lore) 7 (+12), Knowledge (current events) 7 (+12), Knowledge (history) 7 (+12), Gather Information 8 (+15), Notice 5 (+15), Sense Motive 5 (+15), Sleight of Hand 5 (+10), Stealth 6 (+11).

Feats: Connected, Contacts, Benefit 4 (wealth 4), Elusive Target, Evasion 2, Equipment 10 (50 points worth), Hide-in-Plain Sight, Jack-of-All-Trades, Master Plan, Redirect, Seize Initiative, Taunt (Bluff), Well-Informed

Powers: Comprehend 1(all human languages), Immunity 3 (aging, disease, poison,), Immunity 10 (mental effects), Shadow Sorcery (Magic 10 [Darkness Control: AP: Illusion—visual and hearing; Flaw: phantasms; AP: Teleport]).

Complications: Maddeningly cryptic and mysterious.

Background and History

In the shadowy hallways and hidden rooms where the most feared and influential individuals strike the secret deals that run the world, rumors abound concerning the man known as Mr. Chiang: that the blood of the long-gone-from-the-world Shadow Dragons runs in his veins; that he is the only man walking the Earth who got the better of the Devil in a bargain; that the Royal Family of China was doomed the moment his feet left the soil of his homeland. Mr. Chiang never comments on the veracity of any of these whispered stories. He simply nods and smiles if ever questioned as to the truth behind them, too polite to ever correct or contradict those who might recount such tales in his presence. "I am but a humble broker of favors and information," he states quietly, "but if you believe me to be something more, I can only graciously accept your compliment." Yet for all his soft-spoken protestations, Mr. Chiang is clearly a figure who commands almost immense knowledge and resources, a being whose nature verges on the supernatural.

Mr. Chiang can walk through the streets of the largest cities in the world without being recognized, but is almost universally known among the ranks of the most powerful people in government, business, and the underworld. He has the reputation as the man that can negotiate the most difficult deal, solve the most intractable problem, and unearth the most closely guarded bits of information. Mr. Chiang knows all the right people and almost all of them owe him a favor or three. His contacts range from top-level U.S. military contractors to the chairmen of the boards of Taiwan's wealthiest corporations to the thugs and thieves who run the black market in Communist China. He has a network of informants second to none; if any important move is being made in the spheres of government, finance, or crime, Mr. Chiang is almost certainly aware of it—and probably knows more about its repercussions than those actually behind the action. The first records of Mr. Chiang in the United States date back to 1919, when a man matching his appearance and name

began a rapid rise through the ranks of the underworld. Beginning as a simple opium dealer, he soon became the most prominent vice lord among the Chinese immigrant population. This did not satisfy his appetites, and he branched out into the wider world of crime—robberies, smuggling, and murder-for-hire. The authorities were never able to get enough evidence to justify an indictment against him, but the police considered him of the nation's worst scourges. Nonetheless, Mr. Chiang's tenure as a crime lord ended abruptly in 1939, after an encounter with the notorious Professor Purgatory. Mr. Chiang disappeared for fifteen years, with his syndicate falling apart in his absence.

When he returned, Mr. Chiang's M.O. was quite different; he roamed the country committing frauds and confidence games, both grand and modest in scale. He never caused physical harm to anyone in the five year course of these endeavors, though he ruined many victims emotionally and financially without regret. His picture appeared on several "Most Wanted" lists. Then, just as the FBI believed they had him cornered, he once again vanished, this time for twenty years. The Mr. Chiang who surfaced in 1979 had again reinvented himself; he was now the consummate player, an arranger for the elite, able to put together any deal, deliver any pleasure, and resolve any unpleasantness. He became the man who could make anything happen with a few words, a phone call or two, or perhaps a few strokes of his exquisite penmanship. His only requirement (besides the exorbitant fees he charged) was that he do nothing illegal. He assiduously avoided this, taking great pains to observe legal niceties. Though he gleefully twisted the spirit of justice, he never crossed the letter of the law. Mr. Chiang can now honestly claim to have been a completely law abiding citizen for nearly three decades. Though he is responsible for countless immoral and illegal acts, he has been meticulously careful not to have ever been legally culpable for any of them, not even in the sense of a co-conspirator. Instead he has manipulated others to commit his crime by proxy, never directly commanding or even threatening them into doing so, but

instead setting events into motion that end in the result he desires—in such a way that no court could ever prove his intent. And in the rare cases when manipulation will not suffice, Mr. Chiang will simply get in touch with the right people and obtain official sanction for his actions. There have been acts of Congress and executive orders that originated with Mr. Chang—though whether those who enacted such laws knew this is debatable...

Appearance and Demeanor

Mr. Chiang's unimposing physique belies his extraordinary reputation; he is 5'8" tall, with a solid but unremarkable build and a slight paunch. He appears to be an Asian man of middle years, with short graying hair and round wire-rim glasses. He is always fastidiously groomed and impeccably dressed for whatever situation he might be involved in. His one distinguishing characteristic is a dragon shaped tattoo on his left hand. Despite his un-athletic physique, he moves with deftness and grace, astonishingly light on his feet.

Mr. Chiang is almost preternaturally calm and composed, even in the most trying circumstances. He can order a major political figure assassinated in the same tone of voice he uses to arrange for a new orphanage to be built. He has a droll but not sarcastic sense of humor, seemingly always enjoying a small private jest upon the world. Mr. Chiang has one great drive besides gaining influence and wealth—to perform every task with the utmost degree of excellence. He is never content unless he is faced with a challenge that taxes his intellect and will, one that forces him to strive to better his efforts. This characteristic has shaped his career path. When being a crime lord grew too easy for him, he abandoned that path and became the ultimate con man. When this too proved less than fulfilling, he decided that he would become the worst criminal the world had ever seen—one who never truly committed any crime but instead perverted the law itself to serve his purposes. As Mr. Chiang foresaw the world's entry into the information age, it was only natural that information would become his weapon of

choice. Mr. Chiang has absolutely no scruples; he will lie, betray, and take unfair advantage at a moment's notice if such serves his purposes. He will go out of his way to avoid breaking the law—not because he is compelled to do so, but only because it's more of a challenge. But there is one stricture that even he cannot break with impunity. If he fails to fulfill an oath he has taken on the spirits of his kinsmen, it will torment him until he makes good the vow. This may be a curse or a sign of a tiny speck of integrity. Mr. Chiang currently maintains residences in several nations, though he spends the majority of his time split between the U.S., Japan, and Taiwan. He has also become a force to be reckoned with in Red China's burgeoning markets. Under various aliases he has title to five mansions; half a dozen import/export businesses; a vintage car collection; a vineyard; and numerous other trappings of wealth. He has several international bank accounts and small caches of gold, silver, and gems in safe houses across the world. He greatly enjoys indulging in all the best the world has to offer, but abstains from recreational drugs, romantic entanglements, or anything else that might prove a distraction. The only activity he enjoys more than practicing the art of manipulation is counting his riches. He surrounds himself with the trappings of wealth as much as possible, which may be more of an overriding mental and physical need than simple self-indulgence.

Note: Mr. Chiang is intended as homage to the wonderfully villainous Mr. Chang, a pulp character created in 1919 and written for the course of his literary criminal career by A.E. Apple.

An Adventure With Mr. Chiang

Thirty-Six Chambers of Death

While the PCs are enjoying a meal in a Chinese restaurant, some crazy-looking Chinese thugs with tattoos all over their backs (none of them wear shirts) walk in and start threatening the wait-staff. The owner, a gray-haired, kindly-looking man, comes out of the back and asks the

intruders to come talk to him instead of upsetting the diners. For some reason this enrages him and they take hostages from among the customers, making inarticulate threats and confused demands. What PC could resist an opportunity like this? After they have mopped-up the thugs, the owner thanks them profusely, but worries aloud that this may yet bring worse harm down on him and his business.

The goons are members of the Seven Winds Brotherhood, a loosely organized international tong that runs protection rackets in cities around the US and the Pacific Rim. They claim to be descendants of the original Shaolin Temple (as do many Cantonese gangs) inhabitants of the “37th Chamber”, by which they mean the world. Even if the PCs don't go to war with the local chapter, the Brotherhood comes looking for them. They aren't the equal of a group of PL 10 PCs, of course, and the Player Characters should win every encounter. A curious thing starts to happen as they crush the Tong. The Seven Winds Brotherhood all believe that the PCs are agents of some sinister underworld boss they call “Mr. Chiang” and they can't be persuaded otherwise. They seem to think that the PCs have been hired to wipe them out so as to make room in the underworld for some other Tong that Mr. Chiang regards more favorably. PCs who think to go back to the restaurant where this all began will find something odd—it no longer exists. That whole floor of the building is a grain warehouse, filled with sacks of rice that look as though they've been here for months. No records exist of there ever having been a restaurant here and no one in the neighborhood will admit to remembering it. After their final confrontation with the Seven Winds Brotherhood, one of the thugs they've beat up tells them where he thinks Mr. Chiang's headquarters is—in an office over an import store in Chinatown.

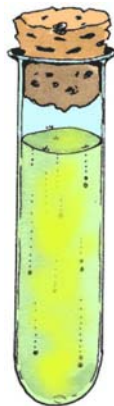
If the PCs follow up the lead, they do in fact find a tiny office, devoid of any useful files or evidence. A large portrait of someone who looks just like the owner of the phantom restaurant hangs on the wall. A cigarette still smolders in an ashtray, but Mr. Chiang himself is of course long gone.

APPENDIX III: DEADLY DEVICES AND SINISTER SPELLS

Many villains are capable of creating all sorts of heinous devices, rituals, and/or weapons by employing their arcane or scientific skills—or in game terms, by using the Inventor rules found on in the core rulebook. A plethora of such villainous creations is presented below, to further expand the resources open to the supermenaces in your campaign. While background is given for the spells and weapons that identify them with specific villains detailed in this supplement (primarily Professor Purgatory), GMs should feel free to assign them to any appropriate super-criminals that exist in their own game worlds. Game Masters might also allow other villains to discover the means for creating these devices by raiding the secret laboratories where the knowledge is hidden.

Note: Allowing a villain to have a ready made invention or magic ritual on hand to use against the heroes is an example of GM fiat, and accordingly the PCs should each receive a Hero Point as compensation.

FAILED SERUM THX84



Emotion Control 15 (Extra: Alternate Save—Fortitude, Contagious, Duration—Continuous; Flaws, Range—no range, Uncontrollable—no control over emotion imposed; Total pp: 15; Inventor DC 25)

Description: Dr. Noble created this serum as a radical treatment for violently psychotic paranormals. It was intended to induce a perpetual state of calm in the recipients by altering the way their brain cell receptors processed certain neurotransmitters. Even if it had worked as intended it would have been highly illegal and unethical, but unfortunately the end result was much worse in most cases than permanent bliss. Most of the serum's human guinea pigs ended up with their brains locked in never-ending states of fear, hopelessness, or rage; an even more horrific side-effect was that some of them manifested the ability to pass on their unbalanced state to others via physical contact. Many of the original subjects are still housed in isolation in ultra-top security federal mental institutions.

FAILED SERUM XG 198

Transformation 10 (genetically altered or mutated human into genetically damaged mutate; Extra: Duration—Continuous [Lasting]; Flaws: Action—one full round to administer, Range—Touch, Unreliable—only 50% of subjects are susceptible; Total pp: 10; Inventing DC 20)

Transformed subjects acquire following disabilities:

- 1) Whenever the character uses any super-power that the GM rules is physically taxing (super-speed, super-strength, or the like), the character must succeed on a Fortitude save against DC 10 or suffer a -1 penalty to all checks, attack rolls, and Defense.
- 2) The character suffers a -2 penalty on Strength checks and Fortitude rolls made to resist exhaustion, disease, and poison.

The above drawbacks give the character an additional 7 power points. These points must be spent on enhanced abilities, enhanced feats or skills, or

powers. This reflects the further mutation the character undergoes as a result of the serum.

Description: This was developed as another of Dr. Nathalia Noble's botched attempts at manufacturing a "cure" for superhuman mutation. When administered, it induces detrimental changes in the genes that are the cause for paranormal abilities, reducing the recipient's ability to withstand the effects of his or her own super-powers. The serum also negatively impacts the overall health and stamina of the recipient. Ironically, the powers of the serum's victim actually increase as a result of its ingestion.

Synaptic Disruptor Rifle



Drain 10 (drains attack bonus, defense bonus, and reflex save—all at once; Extra: Ranged; Power Feats: Homing, Improved Range 1 (25 feet increments), Slow Fade 2 (one minute); Flaw: Unreliable—5 uses per encounter; Total pp: 34)

Description: One of Dr. Noble's more successful anti-superhuman weapons, this modified heavy assault rifle fires a rocket-propelled ultralloy projectile capable of penetrating the outer skin even of super-beings normally considered invulnerable; upon penetration it releases a self-directed microscopic robot that travels to the base of the target's spine. The robot proceeds to scramble the signals emanating from the brain to the muscles, causing the subject to flail about spastically, drastically curtailing combat abilities.

THE METROPOLITAN MELTING MACHINE

Disintegration 5 (Extras: Area Effect—Cloud, Duration—Continuous, PF: Improved Range 6 [1,000 feet increments], Indirect, Progression—area 9 [25,000 foot radius], Triggered—when thunderstorm begins; Flaws: Limited—no affect on living targets. Limited—only useable after seeding the atmosphere, Fades (as chemicals dissipate), Uncontrollable (starts when thunderstorm begins and cannot be turned off once started); Drawbacks: Action—requires one day setting up effect, -6 pp, and Full Power, -1 pp; Total pp: 23; Inventor DC: 33)

Description: One of the grandest of Sweet Adeline's schemes involved "salting" the sky above St. Louis with crystals that imparted corrosive properties to ordinary raindrops, in a plot that threatened to reduce the city to a pile of melted, pitted rubble at the advent of the next thunderstorm. She has yet to revive this formula since her rebirth, as she does not have the requisite access to a large-scale airship.

DELICATE DANCERS OF DECREPITUDE

Summon 8 (Extra: Fanatical; Flaw: Unreliable—the robots created only last for 5 rounds before breaking down; Power Feat: Progression—2 Minions; Total pp: 17 Inventing DC 27)

The Clockwork Ballerinas

PL: 8

Str: 16 (+3) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** -
Int: - **Wis:** 10 (+0) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: +5 **Attack Bonus:** +7
Defense: +8
Toughness Save: + 8 **Fortitude Save:** -
Reflexes Save: +4 **Willpower Save:** -

Skills: Acrobatics 8 (+12), Perform (Dance) 8 (+11), Stealth 4 (+8)

Feats: Blindsight, Fascinate (Perform), Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Move By Action.

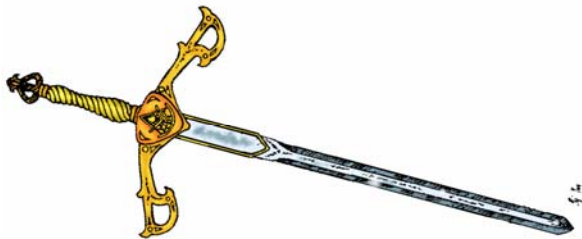
Powers: Immunity (Fortitude saves), Spinning 5, Strike 5 (PF: Mighty), Transform 9 (adult humanoids advance one age category, two age categories if save is failed by 5 or more; each additional age category imposes a -2 penalty to physical traits, as well as cosmetic changes to appearance; Extra: Area effect—Cone)

Drawbacks: Moderate vulnerabilities to electricity and sonics, -5 points.

Description: This malevolent mechanism is the work of Sweet Adeline. The Clockwork Ballerinas are rather limited, jury-rigged robots designed to resemble sleek, dancing women in ballet leotards. These constructs constantly pivot and spin gracefully about while spewing a stream of Adeline's trademark age-inducing gas from the construct's pert oval mouth and raking their targets with sleek metal talons. Adeline has gotten quite adept at quickly assembling these automatons over the years, able to throw together working models from spare parts and chemical residues found in one of her labs on short notice.

ABNEGATION BLADE

(magic weapon)



Emotion Control 20 (Extra: Penetrating; Flaws: Range—no range, Limited—one emotion [despair]; PF: Extended Range—5 feet; AP: Nullify 10 vs. all magic powers at once; Flaw: Touch; AP: Nullify 10 vs. all mutant powers at once; Flaw: Touch; AP: Nullify vs. all psionic powers at once; Flaw: Range—Touch; Total pp: 24; Artificer DC 34).

Description: Those struck by this enchanted blade are cut off from their superhuman abilities, whether their powers stem from magic or mutation. The sword can also be used to infect the souls of those

it strikes with deep feelings of despair, rendering them easy prey for the blade's wielder.

Professor Purgatory originally crafted the Abnegation Blade in Milan, Italy, in the mid-nineteenth century. At the time he was embroiled in a convoluted three-way conflict against a fellow immortal known as the Timeless Duke and a quartet of particularly vicious vampires, a conflict that ended in no more than a stalemate for all concerned.

CONTEMPLATE THE INFINITE

Paralyze 15 (Extra: Area Effect—burst; Flaw: Slow; Power Feat: Triggered—whenever the Professor's cloak is touched; Total pp: 21; Ritualist DC 41).

Description: This spell impresses the vastness of the universe upon those whose minds fail to resist. Those affected must contemplate the infinities of space and time, temporarily distracted from trivial concerns such as their own survival. This is a favorite of Professor Purgatory's, as he likes to remind mortals of their true standing in the scheme of existence.

EXOTIC MATTER CASTER

(weird science device)

Transformation 12 (one type—humanoids into mutants; Flaw: Uncontrollable; Power Feat: Improved Range 1; Total pp: 25; Inventor DC 35)

Description: This odd-looking weapon vaguely resembles a tripod mounted telescope. When activated it emits a stream of so-called exotic particles, a type of matter that falls outside the boundaries of known physics. Living targets struck by these particles mutate uncontrollably, as the very nature of reality in their immediate space is temporarily altered. Fortunately this effect is short-lived, with most victims returning to their normal forms within minutes.

Professor Purgatory got the idea for this device while observing a team of his Borderer lackeys doing repair work outside the Paradise Delayed, while the ship was in

inter-dimensional space. A tiny aperture in space-time opened up near them, spewing forth odd particles that caused their bodies to shift and warp. The Professor has never quite perfected this weapon, however; he cannot predict what changes it will make on its targets, and sometimes the mutations are even beneficial, strengthening his foes. Infrequently, the weapon fails to operate at all. Still, the Professor likes the shock value it brings to an encounter.

IMMOLATING TOUCH

Hellfire Control 10 (Extras: Alternate Save-Will; Aura; Duration-Concentration, Contagious; Flaws: Fades, Range-Touch; Side-Effect; Total pp: 30; Ritualist DC 40)

Description: Professor Purgatory recreated this spell from notes culled from the private library of the Spanish Inquisition's chief torturer. It causes those affected to confront their sins and failings, and to burn with unnatural fire if they lack the mental fortitude to fully own up to them. The effect is not constrained to the original recipient of the spell; everyone who thereafter comes in contact with the victim is immediately targeted as well. The one major drawback is that the spell-caster is also subject to the spell's effect, and must face up to personal recriminations. Purgatory has learned to cast this spell in the form of an aura, "burning" whoever touches him.

SPHERES OF MORTIFICATION



Snare 10 (Extra: Area Effect-Shapeable, Selective; Flaws: Entangle, Range-Touch; Power Feat: Triggered 2; Total pp: 20; Inventor DC 30).

Description: One of Professor Purgatory's simpler mechanisms, this design remains one of his sentimental favorites to spring on those who intrude into one of his lairs. It consists of a large, hollow metal sphere filled with many smaller round projectiles. When the device is triggered, it bursts open, flinging the inner spheres at any targets in a 360 degree radius. Upon impact the spheres change their shape, becoming interlocking coils that wrap around the limbs of their targets, binding them tight. The device can be programmed to go off under a variety of circumstances, such as when touched or when anyone enters a room without punching in the proper security code.

HOME IMPROVEMENTS

The following two devices are not built as inventions, but instead constructed using points available from the Equipment feat, as powers built into a villainous headquarters (in these two cases, in lairs belonging to Professor Purgatory). Note: While the *M&M* core rulebook normally allows powers to be bought as one-point features of a HQ, such powers can only affect those inside the headquarters or the HQ itself. As the devices described below affect those outside the headquarters, they are built assuming that one level of Equipment provides 5 power points for building the device, corresponding to the rules given for building

powers into vehicles. The point break is justified because devices and weapons built into a lair are not always available to the character.

The Hungry Chaldean Sarcophagi

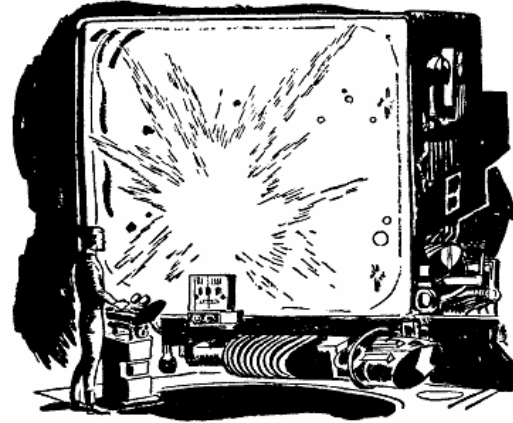
Mimic 12 (all magic traits at once; Extras: Extra Subjects +3, Stacking; Flaws: Limited—can only mimic subjects placed inside Sarcophagi, Tainted; Power Feats; Total PP: 60; Equipment point cost: 12)

Description: A set of stone sarcophagi etched with mystic glyphs, the product of another of Professor Purgatory's grandiose schemes. During one of his more manic moments, he seized on the notion that destroying every major super-villain on Earth (every *other* major super-villain, to be more accurate...) God would recognize his worth and restore him to his "rightful" rank as one of heaven's archangels. Realizing that even he wasn't formidable enough to accomplish this unaided, he sought a means to increase his powers.

His studies uncovered an arcane process said to have been used by Gilgamesh, the legendary Priest-King of Ur. Gilgamesh supposedly attempted to gain immortality by placing three priests of the god Marduk in specially prepared sarcophagi and tapping their life forces. Purgatory modified the formulae involved, allowing him to siphon the magic powers of those placed inside the stone coffins, adding their arcane abilities to his own.

The sarcophagi themselves count as holding cells, with both the Nullify power and 50% greater toughness than normal for the HQ, counting as two headquarters features

THE THANATIC FIELD PROJECTOR



Drain 10 (One Trait—constitution; Extras: Area Effect—Burst, Selective; Concentration, Linked Power—Super-Sense 10 [extended sense—vision x 100,000, Infra-Red Vision, X-Ray Vision], Range—Perception; Power Feats: Progression 11 [the Thanatic field has a radius of 250,000 feet] , Slow Fade—one point recovered per 5 minutes; Flaws: Distracting, Limited—last 5 ranks of power only increase saving throw DC, do not cause Con drain, Limited—victims recover all lost Con points at once when power is countered/nullified/turned off; Total pp: 65; Equipment Points 13).

Description: This absolutely horrific weapon is potentially capable of annihilating nearly every living organism on the planet. It broadcasts a peculiar frequency of radiation that rapidly shuts down the electrical impulses in the nervous systems of higher order beings, causing massive organ system failure.

The prototype for this device was salvaged from the ruins of a secret U.S. military research base in the hinterlands of Alaska. The army researchers were conducting research into the military applications of teleportation when one of their experiments in wormhole generation went awry, breaching the wall between our plane and some far removed realm. Portions of the base were replaced by parts of its analogue in the other plane, while the staff were fused with their other-dimensional counterparts—a heinous physical trauma that proved almost one hundred percent fatal. Several pieces of alien tech were recovered, the Thanatic Field Projector among them. U.S. scientists

gleaned enough of the device's function to recommend its immediate destruction—which resulted in it being classified as ultra-top secret and secured in a government storage facility. Professor Purgatory somehow learned of the device's existence, and sent one of his servitors to retrieve it (probably the Out-Warder, or the Native American anti-hero Warpath if you are using *More Bad Guys*).

Unknown to its government handlers, the original device was effectively harmless, as its creators had calibrated it to target their foes in a millennium spanning conflict, an alien race whose physiologies were radically different from those of terrestrial life forms. Professor Purgatory suspected as much, but still wanted a closer look at it. Examination of the device allowed Professor Purgatory to grasp its basic principles and back engineer his own version. He was not able to duplicate the range or lethality of the original, but he crafted a formidable weapon of mega-destruction nonetheless. He even built in a feature that allowed him to fine tune the death field the device generates, allowing him to inflict mass death more selectively. He had no real desire to slay everyone on Earth, after all—only those deserving of a painful death.

The Thanatic Field generator is built into a sensory bank that allows the Professor to view nearly any potential target on Earth.

TOME OF FORSWORN THAUMATURGIES



Here are three suggested spell effects for the tome currently in Angelica De Lynn's possession. The PL of the spells should be determined by the game master, setting it according to the level of the challenge desired for the heroes. If Angelica becomes a campaign mainstay, the GM might assume the magic in the tome increases over time, matching the increasing power levels of the player characters. The spells listed below assume the tome is in the hands of a relatively incompetent caster; a knowledgeable mage could exert far greater control (assume that a wielder of the tome must succeed on a DC 25 Arcane Knowledge check each round to properly command the magic unleashed, with a failed roll indicating a spell goes disastrously awry). The tome would obviously be a very desirable item for any magic-based villains in the game world. As a pure plot device, no pp total is given for the Tome.

Open Wide the Maw. Dimensional Pocket X (the spell rends a hole in the fabric of reality, one leading to an unpleasant pocket dimension; the dimension is inhabited by a forlorn, unearthly creature that craves companionship, and the creature actively seeks to snatch up those in the

immediate vicinity. The hole in space/time created grows larger and more dangerous each day; Extras: Area Effect–Line, Duration–Continuous; PF: Progression–Each day the Dimensional Pocket gains one step on the Time and Value Chart for determining Area and Capacity; Flaw: Uncontrollable).

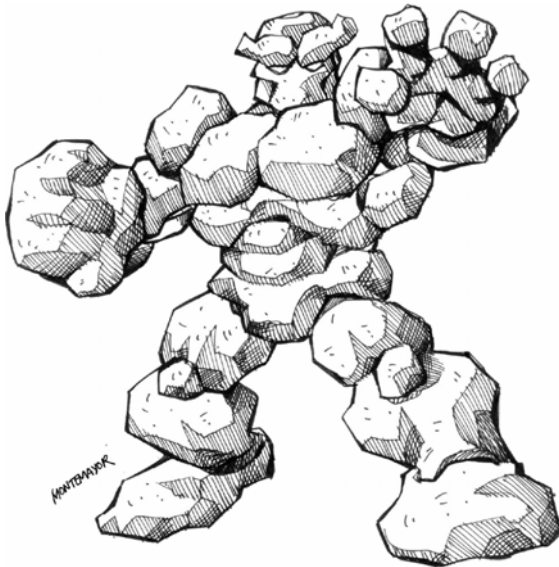
Bring Forth the Exiled: Summon X (the spell summons a formidable alien entity, cosmic trickster, or demonic/diabolic interloper; the creature may simply run wild in the world or might strike terrible sacrifices in return for granting wishes. It is indifferent to human life at best, though it rarely attacks the summoner; Extra: Heroic; Flaw: Attitude–Indifferent at best).

Touch of Proteus: Transform X (the spell imbues the caster with a transmogrifying touch; causing anyone else he or she comes into contact with to change in unpredictable ways; Extras: Aura, Disease, Duration–Continuous; Flaws; Range–Touch, Uncontrollable).

APPENDIX 4: INCREDIBLE ADVENTURES AND ASTONISHING EXPLOITS

Here we have adventures that were just too amazing, too astounding, and frankly, too long to fit in the main body of the rule book. We also didn't have quite enough art to support them. My apologies.

vicious video take one: big payback
for little sister



The heroes begin seeing reports in the papers and television news about attacks on adult bookstores, novelty shops, cult video stores, and other purveyors of similar material all across the city. The attacks occur in late at night or in the early dawn hours. Most of the stores are closed at the time of the attacks but a few are open 24/7, and so have one or more employees and/or patrons present. These witnesses all describe the perpetrator as a large, heavily muscled young African-American male, wearing a mask and a bulky

hooded sweat shirt over a darkly-hued costume. The assailant clearly possesses superhuman strength and stamina—he has broken through padlocked doors, torn wrought-iron gates off their hinges, and shrugged off more than one shotgun blast from store clerks attempting to drive him away. The assaults all follow the same pattern—the attacker smashes through the doors (even if the store is open at the time) and trashes the place, turning over racks of merchandise, smashing registers, wrecking anything in his path. He does not steal anything and so far has not badly hurt anyone, simply tossing aside anybody foolish enough to get in his way.

Initially the attacker seems to be striking out randomly against sellers of salacious material, and the police suspect the individual behind the attacks might be a highly religious but mentally unstable person, lashing out at those he deems are trafficking in immorality. The nature of the attacks and his description as a young black male lead many to speculate (some would say irresponsibly) that he is member of the Nation of Islam or one of that group's more militant off-shoots. But careful investigation will eventually reveal a common thread among his targets. All of them carried products from a company called Vicious Video Productions—and the perpetrator seems to go out of his way to destroy that company's merchandise, stomping their DVDs to bits or shattering them against the walls of the stores he invades.

Vicious Video Productions (don't let the name fool you—they shoot mostly on digital) is an underground purveyor of CDs ranging from fetish-oriented soft core pornography to outrageously raunchy comedy tapes to just plain indescribable weirdness. Founded a scant five years ago, they've already managed to make a name for themselves among fans of the adult film

industry and cult movies. Some of their latest—and most lucrative—ventures involve contracting with paranormal oddballs, has-been super-villains (no one currently wanted), or bottom-feeder sorcerers to participate in their productions, often by putting attractive, scantily-clad young women through various bizarre transformations—giving them temporary super-powers, making them fuzzy all over, having them grow horns and tails, or what have you. These types of videos have a small but loyal audience, surprisingly broad despite their rather specialized subject material. Their most popular feature of this type was the *Misbehavior in Miniature* series, where women were menaced by the still-operable Reducing Ray of Dr. Minimal, a geriatric mad scientist refugee from the 1970s who agreed to license the rights to his shrinking device to supplement his meager Social Security income. The shrinking device caused no real physical harm to the “victims” and the effects were undone simply by reversing the “polarity” of the machine.

Unfortunately, about a year and half ago, the “Enlarge” setting of the Reducing Ray inexplicably malfunctioned during the last release in the series, trapping the female cast of the film at ½ their normal height. The film’s producers immediately tried contacting Dr. Minimal to get him to repair the device, only to find the man had died of heart failure a month prior—though it had been nearly three weeks before his body was found, as no one had bothered to check on his apartment until the smell became overwhelming. The old man was the only one who really had any idea how his Reducing Ray worked. In fact, a cursory examination of the machine by an electrical engineer showed the machine *shouldn’t* have worked at all, ever. Medical and scientific authorities were similarly stumped. No cure was forthcoming, so the women will likely spend the rest of their lives as dwarfs.

The duo behind the company, a pair of thirty year old former college roommates named Troy Denton and Melvin Simms, are notorious for pushing the envelope, but they are always careful to keep everything within the bounds of the law. All the performers in

their films are of legal age and everyone is required to sign all numerous waivers. To further indemnify themselves from any possible legal action, both men are virtually penniless on paper. Denton’s assets are all in his name of his brother Andrew (a sharp tax attorney) while everything Melvin has managed to accumulate is in the name of his wife Judy.

The shrunken women were basically out of luck; when they went first to the police and then to a host of lawyers’ offices they were told that Vicious Video may have been irresponsible, but they had done nothing illegal. Worse, even if the ladies managed to win civil judgments against the pair, they were unlikely to ever collect any damages, due to the safeguards the men had taken to protect their interests.

Most of the women managed to turn their misfortune into something of a positive by selling their stories to tabloids like the *Inquirer* or TV programs like *Entertainment Now*, gaining considerable public sympathy as well as support from the local branch of a national women’s rights group (several were offered college scholarships as a result). A couple actually continued on with their adult film careers, cashing in on their 15 minutes of fame and their new physical novelty. But one was basically left out in the cold—Tonya Washington, the only African American among the women and the second cousin of Tyler Washington, the Black Phantom.

Whether Tonya was overlooked in the media coverage of the event because of her race is questionable. She was the shyest among the women affected, the least comfortable on camera—the feature she had been doing when the accident happened had been her first. She never planned on a career as an adult film performer and would never have agreed to do it at all if she hadn’t needed the money for college. Truth to tell, she was also not quite as attractive as the others.

Whatever the case, Tonya’s plight generated little publicity and she received little of the emotional and financial support that the others did. Depressed and broke, she ended up moving in with her family in the high rise apartment building where the

government had re-located them—from the 40th Street projects. Her family tried to comfort her, but nothing they did seemed to lift her spirits.

Tonya's parents and siblings were all angry that the men behind Vicious Video paid no penalty for what had happened, but her younger brother Alvin was especially enraged. Alvin decided to get even for what happened to his sister by getting back in touch with his cousin Tyler, whom he had often hung out with in the old neighborhood before Tyler was sent to juvenile hall. Tyler had dropped out of sight, but Alvin knew how strong his cousin had been and was certain he knew who the mysterious Black Phantom that ran around guarding the old projects had to be. Alvin figured that with Tyler's help, it would be easy to get revenge on Vicious Video. After the Black Phantom busted up enough stores that carried Vicious Video, he would send the company a ransom demand explaining that either they could pay restitution or see their business go down the drain when store owners figured out that anyone carrying their products was a target.

Alvin successfully tracked down his super powered cousin and won his support for the plan. Afterward they rounded up a few more of their old crew to serve as lookouts and getaway drivers during the Black Phantom's missions. Alvin figured that by the time he sent the ransom note the Vicious Video people would be intimidated and willing to settle, especially as he only plans to ask for a paltry hundred grand.

If the heroes figure out that the store invasions are actually a roundabout attack on Vicious Video, it probably won't take them long to guess that they are connected to the incident *Misbehavior in Miniature* incident, the only reason anyone would really have a grudge against the company. Given the race of the assailant, they will then likely guess that the attacks are related to Tonya Washington. Their guess will be confirmed when Denton and Simms contact them about receiving a ransom demand—one that specifies that the money be dropped off in the now deserted 40th Street projects.

If the heroes and/or the police accompany Denton and Simms to the drop-off, they will probably be spotted by the numerous look-outs Alvin has posted, but regardless of whether they are or not, Alvin and Tonya will both be picked up shortly thereafter by the police, while they try to board a bus out of town. Tonya was not involved in her brother's plan, but when the ransom delivery went wrong, he explained what was going on to her and convinced her they both had to get away—that no one would believe she was innocent.

Unfortunately, the destructive campaign against Vicious Video doesn't stop after Alvin and Tonya's arrest; Black Phantom only grows angrier over the injustice being done to his cousins. He decides to change tactics and target Vicious Video more directly; he hops a bus downtown to bust up their office and then proceeds to wreck the set of their latest production as well. Meanwhile, Tonya's case has begun to attract the attention it originally failed to generate. Several local and national civil rights leaders begin speaking out against what they see as the police jumping to an unwarranted conclusion about Tonya's involvement, as well as the general indifference the media displayed to the only black victim of Vicious Video's "gross negligence". Soon there are protests outside police headquarters and city hall. Interestingly, the civil rights types usually involved in this sort of thing are joined in their efforts by several evangelical/fundamentalist groups, who are showing support due to their stance against Vicious Video and other makers of "sinful" entertainment. Employees of Vicious Video receive harassing phone calls and threatening emails. Several of them find their tires slashed in the company parking lot, while others have their windows broken or the doors of their homes defaced with graffiti. Black Phantom has nothing to do with any of this.

To complicate matters even further, a protest staged by one of the more militant groups turns violent, with police clashing with marchers. Black Phantom (in his civilian identity) is present, as are a few of his and Alvin's old crew members, some of them

armed with clubs, blades, or even handguns (none are more than PL 3). They are all mixed in with the protesters (in fact they're likely responsible for instigating the conflict), and neither they or Black Phantom will hold back if any heroes intervene to quell the riot. Many of those swept up in the violence are women, children, or senior citizens. The heroes' biggest challenge in this situation will be putting a halt to the violence while keeping civilian casualties to a minimum. Any real or even perceived use of excessive force on the part of the heroes, especially white heroes, will generate a lot of negative publicity for the PCs.

If the GM wishes to make things even more difficult for the PCs, a couple of the protesters are a pair of long-retired black heroes, Roland and Leila St. James, AKA Heavy Brother and Jet Metal. This husband and wife team was last active during the early 1980s, before they decided to commit to working full-time in the civil-rights field (Roland got a master's in public policy while Leila became a lawyer). Neither is in top condition, and they prefer solving problems with negotiation and litigation, but both are still capable of putting up a fight if they feel threatened by heavy handed super-heroes.

Heavy Brother

PL: 8

Str: 12/24 (+1/+7) **Dex:** 9 (-1)
Con: 10/26 (+0/+8) **Int:** 14: (+2)
Wis: 16 (+3) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: -1 **Attack:** 9 **Defense:** 6
Damage: 7 **Toughness Save:** 1/8
Fortitude Save: 1/8 **Reflexes Save:** -1
Willpower Save: 3

Skills: Bluff 6 (+9), Diplomacy 6 (+9), Intimidate 6 (+9), Knowledge (civics) 6 (+8), Knowledge (history) 6 (+8), Knowledge (current events) 3 (+5), Knowledge (streetwise) 3 (+5), Notice 5 (+8), Profession (administrator) 5 (+8).
Feats: Improved Block, Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Teamwork, Power Attack.
Powers: Alternate Form (Solid) 9 (Living Stone; grants following powers: Density 6 [Enhanced Strength 12, Impervious Protection 4, Immovable 2, Super Strength

2—max load 5,600 lbs, Mass x 5], Enhanced Constitution 7, Immunity [critical hits, fire based attacks, life support], Mind Shield 5)

Background: Roland St. James inherited his power to change his body to living stone from his late father, a 1960s era hero called Asphalt. He was only thirteen when the android Epsilon (see page 225) murdered his father. When his own mutant powers surfaced a year later, Roland vowed to continue in his father's footsteps as a champion of the people and crusader for social justice. He grew up to become neighborhood hero in his native Detroit, where he frequently met and fought alongside Jet-Metal. Eventually they both joined the 1980s incarnation of the Young Lions, a youth-oriented super-team. It was during their exploits with the team that Heavy Brother and Jet-Metal began their romance. But despite his best efforts, Roland never really felt comfortable in his role. He always felt he was in his father's shadow, and that Heavy Brother would never quite measure up to the exploits of Asphalt, who was almost a legend among Detroit's black community. It didn't help that he could never match the raw might that Asphalt commanded—Heavy Brother just wasn't as strong or durable. His dissatisfaction led him to look for other ways he could make a difference in the world. When he left the Young Lions to pursue higher education, Jet-Metal followed him, and they attended the University of Michigan together. The former Heavy Brother is six feet tall and thickly built. His hair is graying and receding at the temples. Now 47, Roland is still relatively fit, but too much time in front of the computer and the TV set has left him with a pot belly, stiff knees, and dull reflexes. In contrast to his wife, Roland is normally a quiet, soft-spoken man of few words. When he speaks, he says what he means and means what he says. He's not as much of an "angry young man" as he was in his youth, but is still quick to lose his temper about any perceived abuse or unfair treatment. He's especially touchy about super-heroes roughing up civilians, particularly white heroes manhandling minorities.

Jet-Metal

PL 9

Str: 9 (-1) **Dex:** 14 (+2) **Con:** 12 (+1)

Int: 16 (+3) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 16 (+3)

Initiative: 2 **Attack:** 12 **Defense:** 10

Damage: 6 (Strike)

Toughness Save: 3/8 **Fortitude Save:** 3

Reflex Save: 9 **Willpower Save:** 3

Skills: Bluff 6 (+9), Diplomacy 6 (+9), Knowledge (history) 4 (+7), Knowledge (civics) 5 (+8), Knowledge (current events) 3 (+6), Knowledge (streetwise) 3 (+5), Notice 4 (+7), Profession (lawyer) 5 (+8).

Feats: Evasion, Fast Overrun, Improved Trip, Move-By Action, Taunt.

Powers: Device 10 (liquid metal armor)

Equipment: Liquid Metal Armor (Hard to Lose, grants following powers: Enhanced Feat: Endurance; Enhanced Feat: Quick Change 2; Immunity 3 [cold, heat, high pressure], Impervious Protection 5; Super Speed 6 [Quickness 6, Speed 500 MPH, Initiative +24, Power Feats: AP: Spinning 6; AP: Strike 6; Rapid Attack; Rapid Fire; Wall Running; Water Running]

Background: Leila St. James-Dumont was given her Liquid Metal Armor by a grateful extraterrestrial visitor, whom she befriended when he was temporarily stranded on Earth. The armor allows the wearer to channel ambient kinetic energy into amazing feats of super-speed. She and her alien friend (whom she called “Mojo”, as she was unable to pronounce his real name) had a number of minor adventures before he was able to repair his star-craft and return to his home. After he left, she continued to protect Detroit as Jet-Metal—the fastest, slickest sister on the planet (or at least that’s what she claimed). She teamed up several times with Heavy Brother, and they both briefly served together in the revived Young Lions, where they began dating. She enjoyed her superhero role more than Heavy Brother did, but followed her boyfriend’s lead when he left the team. Like him, she eventually decided to retire her costumed identity in favor of what she deemed more adult pursuits.

Leila is extremely bright and quick-witted, always ready with a clever quip or stinging argument. She’s more level-headed than her husband, less likely to initiate

combat, as she would now rather go after her opponents in court instead of with her fists. She will not hesitate to back her husband if matters get physical, however. A few years older than her husband, Leila recently celebrated her 50th birthday. She still sports a trim figure, though she’s not the athlete she once was. Her grey hair is short and curly, and she wears a stylish but thick pair of eyeglasses. She favors conservative business attire and pants-suits.

I Hate Me, She's So Thin!



The big distraction of the moment in the media is the re-emergence of the slim, beautiful Angelica. Only a few weeks back, she had been making the rounds of the network and cable “news” shows (with the careful stipulation that she was only to be shot from the neck up) to hawk her book *We Have the Power: Taking Our World Back*, co-authored by a PhD anti-superhuman activist Dr. Lori Masters. In the book and her interviews she was pressing for stricter federal oversight of supers and harsher penalties for any crimes involving the use of extraordinary powers. In the middle of the press tour she vanished for three days—only to reappear *sans* over 300 lbs, her old toned, tanned self. She claims that the effects of her transformation simply wore off—she’s not going to question it, she’s simply thankful for her good fortune. She drops out of the book tour, cancels plans to appear at a Congressional hearing regarding superhuman registration laws, and enters into talks for new movie deals and personal appearances. She even rekindles her romance with Bret Palmer, the paramour who broke off their relationship after super-villains blimped her up.

Not long afterward, the heroes become aware that Angelica’s hired thug Lash Lightning has been trying to get in touch with them. Unless they have a public HQ or meeting place, Lash probably won’t know how to contact them directly, but he’s easy enough to find, as he’s almost always either at his cheap apartment, the villain bar Lock-Up, or the back-alley gym where he

works out. When the heroes get in touch, Lash has quite a story to tell.

He says that just before the “old” Angelica reappeared, she confided in him that she thought she had finally found something promising in the Tome—the dusty old book she claims holds all kinds of magic secrets. Then she left for a long weekend, taking the book with her; when she returned it was as skinny Angelica. She told everyone on her staff that the spell had worked and it was hard to argue with the results. At first, Lash was happy for her, even if it probably meant the end of his job. She was a good boss and a nice lady, even if she was a little... uh, what was the word... narci... narciss... even if she spent too much time thinking about herself. But then he started noticing little things that just seemed wrong; she didn’t smile as much, she was kind of rude to the help, she started talking about getting back with that Bret creep even though she used to talk about what a lousy fraud the guy was, and there was something different about her eyes, even though they looked exactly the same. When Lash tried to talk to her about what was bothering him, she flew off the handle and canned him—told him never to come around again or she’d get a court order against him.

Lash explains that, ok, at first he figured it was like a lot of other things in his life that looked like they were going to take him someplace at first and then ended up going nowhere. But then he started having these dreams, the same one every night, of the old fat Angelica in a white apron, serving pies in a truck stop on an out-of-the-way exit on a rural highway. The weekend before last, a name popped into his head—Smithton, Pennsylvania (or wherever the GM wishes). He’d never been there, but he had the sudden urge to visit the place.

When Lash got off the highway exit (dressed in civvies), he found a sprawling, thriving truck stop, complete with multiple gas stations, greasy spoons, garages—and a combination bakery/restaurant called the *Sweet Spot*, which was supposed to have the best pies in Western PA. The inside of the restaurant looked just like what he saw in his dreams. He took a seat and waited to

see what would happen next. He didn't have to wait long—his waitress was a woman whose nametag said “Deana”—and who looked like the old Angelica's twin sister, except for her short, bleached blonde hair, chintzy-looking red glasses, and the small mole on her left cheek.

Zack kept from spitting out his coffee and turned on the charm, trying his hardest to chat her up and pump her for information. Deana took his attempts at conversation as flirting, and made it clear she had a boyfriend—and an engagement ring. But she was happy enough to make small talk while she served his food and coffee; he found out her full name was Deana Ann Lynnwood, that she'd lived in Smithton her whole life, and that she'd been working at the Sweet Stop for the past ten years. She only filled in as a hostess or waitress when they were short-staffed—she was an apprentice baker now, and everyone said she had a real talent for making pies. She said she was grateful, because working in the bakery was easier on her feet than waitressing, especially with all the weight she'd put on since high school. She gave her fiancée's name as Bill Summers, a truck driver whose first wife died three years ago. She said he was an older guy, but really nice, and that he didn't mind her size at all.

Lash hung around after that, staying at a cheap motel. On Monday he went to the town library and did a little research, looking in yearbooks and old newspapers. Initially everything checked out—pictures of Deana showed a slightly frumpy young woman, increasingly heavy as the years went on. There were news stories mentioning her as a volunteer in church activities, working at the restaurant, and playing small roles in a local theatre company. But on an impulse Lash reached into the duffel bag where he'd been storing his gear and put one hand on his helmet; that's when everything changed. The pictures and text of what he'd been reading blurred and shifted. He then found out about the real Deana, and the kind of life she had led. The real Ms. Lynnwood was born on the same day as Angelica, and she did have short, bleached blond hair and a mole, but that was where the resemblance

ended—Deana was skinny as a stick, and sported multiple tattoos by the time she was in her twenties. The rest...well, he wants the PCs to go there with him and see for themselves. Before he left, Lash tried making copies of the newspaper articles and pictures to show other people, but they didn't change when he touched the helmet as the originals had, so all he doesn't have any evidence in hand to show them—just his word that it's all true.

The PCs will have to decide for themselves whether to believe Lash or not; his story is fairly outlandish, even in a world full of mutants and magic, and it's possible he's simply slipped a few cogs, but he's not bright or imaginative enough to come up with the tale as part of a complicated scam and that's not his M.O. anyway. And Ms. De Lynn's behavior has been out-of-character since she slimmed down—she's been much more of a typical jet-setting Hollywood starlet and much less the non-conformist social activist. Getting back together with Bret Palmer does seem odd after many public statements she released trashing him. But the changes she's been through could throw anyone for a loop. Maybe they should investigate?

Should the PCs agree to visit Smithton with him, Lash suggests they all go out of costume, so as not to attract attention. If they refuse (because their identities are secret), their arrival attracts a great deal of attention, as no one in town has seen supers in person before. Lash takes them to the diner when “Deana” is about to get off her shift; he re-introduces himself and tells her that he'd like Deana to meet his special friends. Again, if the heroes are in costume they will have a crowd of locals around them, and Deana will be blown away that they are interested in speaking with her. The heroes discover through conversation that Ms. Lynnwood is pleasant, relatively happy, and doesn't seem self-conscious about her girth at all. She's generally content with her job and hobbies, but in a few instances she speaks longingly about wishing for more in her life at times; something beyond her small truck-stop town. But every time she's considered applying to college or visiting a larger city,

she's gotten terribly anxious and backed out. Deana guesses this means she was meant to stay where she is now.

Zack then leads them to the library, pulls out the articles he looked up when he was there before, and has the PCs read them first without touching his helm, and then with their hands on the crest of the helmet. The words and pictures do indeed change. And anyone who makes an Investigate roll vs. a measly DC 15 can find out a lot more than Lash did.

As the PCs read through newspaper articles and police arrest reports, they quickly discover that the reality of the genuine Deana Ann Lynnwood's life wasn't nearly as pleasant as the existence that the current Deana is living. The real Deanna was an emotionally troubled young woman who had recurring problems with drugs and alcohol. She trained as a nurse but was fired and lost her license when she was caught stealing pain killers from the hospital. She basically spiraled downward after that, working intermittently as a waitress at more than one of the many coffee shops and diners that make up the highway town, but mostly supporting herself through prostitution and small-time drug dealing.

She did date Doug Summers for awhile, during one of the brief periods where she was clean and sober, but that ended badly when she returned to drugs. She and her dealer/boyfriend broke into Doug's apartment while he was on the road and stole 10,000 dollars from the hidden wall safe Doug had told her about. They took off after that, apparently intending to go to Las Vegas, but Deana only made it as far as Indiana before overdosing in the lady's room of yet another truck stop diner.

The night her body was identified, her mom attempted suicide by swallowing a whole bottle of Percoset. Her father started drinking heavily, and the couple separated after the wife's release from the hospital, ending a thirty-five year marriage.

If any of the PCs have psychic powers, successfully probing "Deana's" subconscious mind will reveal that she does have hidden memories of a life as Angelica De Lynn, memories that end with a

wrenching event that plunges Angelica into darkness. The memories are buried so deep that the DC for the Mind Reading check is increased by +10. A character with the appropriate super-senses (Magical Awareness for example) can detect there is "something wrong" with Deana's "aura", almost as if she's two different people.

Presumably the heroes will want to investigate further at this point. A successful Knowledge (Arcane Lore) check will reveal what likely happened to Ms. De Lynn—and who this version of Deana Lynnwood actually is. The DC for the check is DC 30, but a good occult library can add a +5 bonus to the roll; alternately a DC 25 Gather Information check among the mystic community might suffice. The Tome of Forsworn Thaumaturgies has the power to call forth entities from beyond the earthly plane capable of taking on the guise of their summoner; such changelings will often either eliminate the individual whose identity they assume or else perform a "karmic transposition" and banish the person to a different role in life. This is what happened to Angelica De Lynn.

Occult lore on these types of occurrences is limited, but suggests that they are extraordinarily difficult to reverse. To set things aright, the doppelganger must be destroyed or forced from the material world. The first is extraordinarily hard to accomplish, as such creatures are nearly impervious to physical harm in our universe—only divine magic or absolutely overwhelming force (on the level of a tactical nuke) has the power to harm them. Banishing them is a little easier—they can be dismissed by the same spell that brought them here, or by tricking them into revealing that they are not human in front of at least 13 other people.

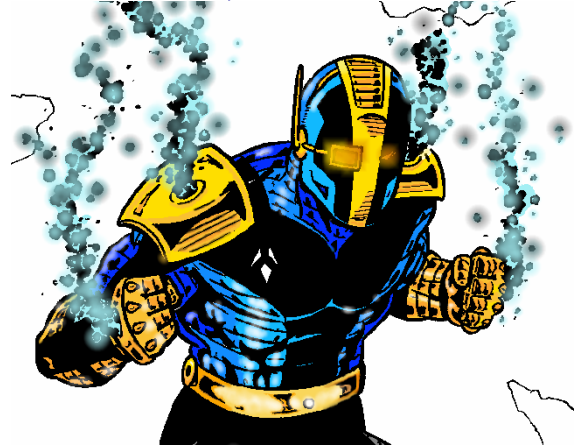
The moral quandary for the heroes is that nearly everyone is arguably better off with the situation as it stands—even for Ms. De Lynn. Angelica's/Deana's prospects may be limited, but she's got a generally happy life in Smithton—she's got a devoted fiancée, loving parents, friendly co-workers, and a job she seems to enjoy. Thanks to her false memories, she's comfortable and well-adjusted about her size. And the changeling

back in Hollywood can be the kind of daughter that Angelica's mother, a jet-setting European actress, expects and is accustomed to. But the fact remains that Angelica was once again changed against her will—and that the being who transformed her is a creature of wild magic, unpredictable and potentially very dangerous, especially with access to fame and wealth. Can she safely be allowed to remain in the human world?

If the heroes decide to go after the doppelganger, they will have a formidable challenge ahead. The new Angelica De Lynn is very much in the public spotlight, and her bodyguards and media people are almost omnipresent. She knows the Tome can banish her, and while she can't destroy it, she keeps in well-hidden. Furthermore, she has hired several mercenary paranormals, each considerably meaner and more vicious than Lash Lightning ever was. Speaking of Lash, he will insist on accompanying the heroes when they go up against the supernatural thing that took over his boss-lady's life. If the PCs refuse to go after the changeling, he will take matters into his own hands, likely with disastrous results.

The Angelica doppelganger has the same stats listed for "slender Angelica" but with the following powers: Immunity (life support, un-aging), Immunity (all non-divine magic), Impervious Protection 20, and Mind Shield 15. If hard-pressed, she can use the Tome to wield 10 ranks of Magic (any 2 pt/rank effect the GM feels like throwing at the PCs). Her Protection does not function against divine magic or divinely forged weapons. What counts as "Divine"? Any implement that has been consecrated to the forces of light, whoever the consecrator believes them to be (God, Allah, Buddha, the Moon, etc).

Vicious Video Take Two: Shock Value



The bottom feeders of the direct-to-video entertainment market at Vicious Video latest release is the outrageously raunchy and vulgar *Totally Tasteless Comedy Tape*, which features a variety of short comedy films and sketches, all of them in terrible taste (though many are genuinely—and profanely—funny). Among the skits is a short digital film mocking the love triangle that existed between the (then slender) Angelica De Lynn, her paramour (and "World's Sexiest Man") Brett Barnett, and Brett's now ex-wife Gerri Allison., using unknown actors who vaguely resemble their world famous counterparts. The film ends with a grossly obese version of Angelica (now played by an middle aged, very overweight actress) in simulated three-way intimacy with "Brett" and "Gerri", both of whom are attired in Bondage and Domination gear. For whatever, a clip from this part of the *Totally Tasteless Comedy Tape* captures the imagination of some members of Generation Y, who turn it into one of the world's most downloaded segments on Y-Tube. This eventually runs its' course, but not before the Entertainment In Depth TV show does a feature they title "Angelica's Latest Pain."

The truth is that Angelica De Lynn couldn't care less about the matter and does not feel any personal humiliation because of it. She hasn't seen the material and has no wish to—she's well aware that it is crude, tasteless, and minding laughs at her expense—but in her former career she was well acquainted with comedians and would-

be comedians mocking her behavior and lifestyle. She refuses to be interviewed about the matter, but her PR spokeswoman Claire Beaumont states on her behalf that "...while Ms. De Lynn believes finding humor in others' misfortune to be a sad comment on those who do so, she has no personal reaction to the matter." Lash Lightning, on the other hand, finds plenty objectionable about the tape; he makes several angry and obscenity-ridden remarks on camera (heavily bleeped by network censors) about people who find it funny, and says that the people behind it might want to watch their backs.

Shortly thereafter, the two men responsible behind Vicious Video, Troy Denton and Melvin Simms, are found lying in the private parking lot of their building. Both were roughly assaulted, bearing numerous bruises, contusions, and fractured ribs, though neither was badly hurt. Among their injuries are mild electrical burns, and hospital tests indicate they lost consciousness due to electrical shock. Neither got a good look at their attacker before they blacked out, though both describe catching brief glimpse of a large, tall man. The security cameras in the lot had been disabled, so no tape exists of the attacker. But the police have an obvious suspect in mind. They pick up Lash at Angelica De Lynn's mansion and take him to police HQ for questioning. He denies any involvement, and Ms. De Lynn provides an alibi for him, stating that he was filling in as her personal trainer, since her usual trainer Kristy Walls (who doubles as a bodyguard) is on vacation. Reluctantly, the authorities release Lash, though they maintain the investigation. As it involves a superhuman with a history of violent behavior (though no convictions), they also contact the heroes, asking them to be ready to assist in bringing Lash in by force if that becomes necessary.

A few days later, events take a darker turn. It is discovered that Dane Daniels, Missy Bannerman, and Callie Thorpe—actors who portrayed "Brett", "Gerri", and "Thin Angelica" in the skit—were attacked while the three were partying in the hot tub on the back deck of Daniels' brownstone. The three were found by Vera

Grossman, a nurse and part-time character actress who had played the part of "Fat Angelica" in the sketch. Daniels was having the other two actresses over to his place to celebrate their newfound fame, and invited Vera to come over as well; she figured they might just be inviting her as a joke, but thought it might be fun anyway. When she arrived, she knew there was something wrong when she saw that the lock on the front gate was broken off and no one responded to her on the intercom mounted on the gate. Vera went inside anyway, and found the three of them lying in the hot tub unconscious. Despite her girth, she succeeded in pulling all three from the water. After calling 9-11, she administered CPR.

While the two women regained consciousness, Daniels remains comatose. Medical records show he had a pre-existing heart condition, and the electrocution triggered a stroke. His prognosis is uncertain. When questioned, Missy recalls turning her head just in time to see a tall armored man draped in a cloak plunge his hand into the water. Then there were sparks everywhere and she blacked out. The police immediately move to arrest Lash, but he is not at Angelica's place when they arrive—and neither Ms. De Lynn nor any of the staff can vouch for his whereabouts that night.

The police think it prudent to ask the PCs to aid in the search for Lash. He's considered highly dangerous and authorities believe it's always best to have as much force on hand as possible when trying to apprehend a super-villain.

If the heroes actively participate in the investigation, the police supply them with a list of Lash's known haunts—dive bars, sports bars, strip clubs, and back-alley gyms. Enough trolling around in these seedy places will point the heroes in the right direction, one of the city's run down tenement areas known for its' high population of "working girls."

If the heroes don't really follow up or actively search for Lash, the GM should have one of their routine patrols lead them to him instead; maybe they follow a speeding, intoxicated driver into the area, or simply notice strange lights and screams for

help coming from that direction. Whatever brings them there, when they do arrive, they are accosted by a “professional escort” named Carrie who tells them that her friend Samantha agreed to a “date” with a “tall, weird guy in a helmet” who offered her two hundred dollars for an hour; Samantha followed the guy into one of the neighborhood’s cheap motels. That was two hours ago and she still hasn’t come out. When Carrie went to the foot of the building, she saw weird lights through the top floor window and heard Samantha yelling for help.

When the heroes enter the building, they will hear all sorts of commotion, and notice the front desk is overturned and the wooden banister is broken. When they reach the top floor, they find a room with the door busted and flashes of electrical light flashing on and off. In the middle of the room Lash Lightning grapples with a sinister looking figure in full body armor, sparks flying everywhere. In one corner, a topless woman cowers and screams, trying to shield herself with a blanket. A sudden spark has ignited the room’s mattress, and the fire is quickly spreading. Unless the PCs can quickly douse the fire, the motel will swiftly be completely ablaze. The motel’s residents have mostly fled, but a few elderly occupants remain, and will have to be evacuated. Samantha is frozen in terror and will have to be rescued as well.

Lash and the other figure will continue to fight, unless the PCs forcibly put them down and drag both from the building. If the GM wants to give the heroes a tougher time, assume that Lash isn’t in the building alone; he brought a few friends along to guard the hallway/stairwell (either 4-6 armed PL 4 thugs or 1-2 PL 8 or 9 “mook villain” buddies of his—perhaps second-string enemies of the player characters). They will attempt to keep the PCs from breaking up the fight, though they won’t stay long once the fire gets out of control.

Once the PCs get the situation under control (and fire fighters arrive to douse the flames), the real story begins to emerge. The armored individual is the latest incarnation of Dr. Shock, a sexual deviant who enjoys hurting women with

electricity. Dr. Shock’s exoskeleton has changed hands several times, but always seems to bring out the worst in those who wear it.

This Dr. Shock is Sanjay Gupta, an unemployed, schizophrenic electrical engineer who recently stopped taking his medication. For some reason, Sanjay developed a fixation on the actors who appeared in his favorite Y-tube download, which led to his assault at Dane Daniels home. When he heard word on the street that Lash Lightning had been tipped off that “Dr. Shock” was in the city and was looking for him, Sanjay holed up in the filthy tenement motel. But he couldn’t resist hiring the woman to come up to his room, where he excited himself by paying her to dance nude while he gave her mild electric shocks. Then Lash burst into the room and attacked him. That was where the heroes came in.

Dr. Shock is found not competent to stand trial, and gets sentenced to confinement in a mental institution. The assault charges against Lash are dropped. Charges stemming from the motel incident are dismissed when a judge finds he wasn’t properly read his rights.

Strangely, Sanjay Gupta maintains that he never even met the owners of Vicious Video, let alone attacked them in a parking lot. He says this even after it’s explained that he will face no further consequences if he admits to doing so. He’s telling the truth; Lash actually did it, and Angelica lied to cover for him. Sometimes justice isn’t perfect.

Note: Even if there are mind-readers or post-cogs among the heroes, most courts don’t accept psychic evidence.

Dr. Shock

PL: 9

Str: 10/25 (+0/7) **Dex:** 14 (+2)
Con: 13 (+1) **Int:** 15 (+2) **Wis:** 10(+0)
Cha: 10(+0)

Initiative: 2 **Attack:** 9 **Defense:** 9

Damage: 9 (electrical blast)

Toughness Save: 1/9 **Fortitude Save:** 5

Reflexes Save: 5 **Willpower Save:** 0

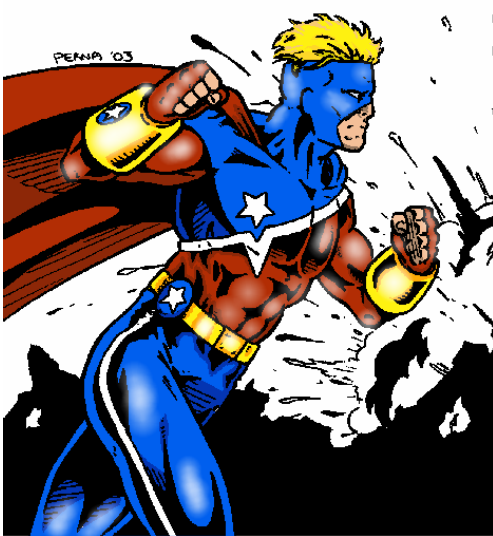
Skills: Climb 4 (+4/11), Craft (electronics) 10 (+12), Disable Device 8 (+10), Knowledge (physical sciences) 4 (+6), Knowledge (technology) 8 (+10), Stealth 8 (+10), Intimidate 6.

Feats: All-Out Attack, Diehard, Improved Initiative 1, Inventor, Power Attack, Startle, Surprise Attack.

Powers: Device 12: The Dr. Shock exoskeleton (Hard to Lose; Blast [electrical] 9 [Extra: Aura; Flaw: Touch; AP: Paralyze 9], Enhanced Strength 15, Immunity 2 [suffocation], Impervious Protection 8, Super-Senses 3 [Dark Vision, Detect Movement])

Note: A different version of Dr. Shock appears in the PBW rogues gallery "The Bad Guys."

A VALIANT MISSION



Reports begin coming in about a series of brutal attacks on super-villains. Several around the country have been found

severely beaten, and one is in a coma. Some were street-level types, but a few were relatively heavy-hitters. All had extensive criminal records. In each case, the victims (those still able to speak) talk about being set upon by a figure clad hid to toe in black, wearing a full face mask. The attacker is described as being immensely strong and tough, and having the ability to fly. There is no real connection among the villains, though several have teamed-up from time to time.

A short while later, the PCs are contacted by Captain Valiant, a well-known superhero with over thirty years experience in the game. Valiant is good-looking, powerful, effective and well-spoken. He's also controversial and polarizing. He's known as much for his conservative political views, arrogant behavior, and his messy divorce as for his heroic exploits. Valiant was a superstar during the Reagan era and enjoyed a massive resurgence in popularity following 9/11. But his affiliation with Bush administration hut him badly as the public soured on the Iraq War, and a mission against the super-terrorists Team Elugal that resulted in heavy civilian casualties in Baghdad didn't help. Still, he remains very popular with the right wing audience, hosting a weekly radio talk show and commanding high speaking fees. He invites the heroes to Valiant Manor, his headquarters/luxury home, saying that he has important business to discuss with them. If they balk, he'll offer 5,000 dollars apiece just to come and hear what he has to say, as well as promising to take them out to the best restaurants and clubs afterward.

Once the heroes arrive at Valiant Manor and he has the heroes gathered alone in his study with him, the Captain says that what he is about to tell them is off the record and not to leave the room—if the heroes go to the police or the press, he'll deny everything and then nuke the PCs in the courts—he blusters that "none of you will be able to afford a damn pair of tights if you breathe a word of this." But then his arrogant façade begins to crumble; he slumps down in his cushy leather chair, rests his head in his hands, and begins speaking in a quieter voice. He admits he

brought the PCs here because he needs their help.

He explains that he's the one responsible for putting those super-punks in the hospital. A couple of years ago he wouldn't have bothered to hide his identity while doing this—hell, he would have made sure there were camera crews around while he put a hurt on the scum. But his lawyers and PR people told him to lay off that sort of thing and he was doing what they wanted, being a good boy...until he got himself into a little bit of trouble (an understatement). See, about two months ago he was at one of his favorite restaurants, Ruth Christopher's Chophouse, enjoying a good meal, a bottle of cognac, and a fine cigar, when two hot twenty-something women wearing next to nothing came over to his table, made some small talk and the Captain up to their hotel room after he finished his meal ("this sort of thing is routine for me, you understand"), dropping off their key card.

Not one to refuse such an invitation, he was soon in the room with the young women. That was when the trouble began. The Captain explains that he started feeling a little light-headed and his head was tingling, but also very...excited. At first he chalked it up to gulping down a few too many drinks beforehand, even for him, and the fact that the two sluts were pretty damn fine. But then things turned nasty; just as he was getting comfortable with the two hotties, the door opened and this huge blob of a woman walked in, wearing a mask, wig, and leather dominatrix outfit. The Captain figured the whole thing was a practical joke, probably set up by one of his cronies—but then he found he couldn't take his eyes off the fat woman. He actually started becoming...uh, well, anyway, he knew then that he'd been drugged and that he was in trouble. He won't go into the details, except to say that while he was forced to take part in some embarrassing acts, he didn't actually sleep with the cow (a point he is insistent about). He thinks the whole episode lasted a few hours—it was kind of hazy—but once it was over, the woman took off the mask and wig, revealing herself to be Angelica De Lynn.

Angelica told Captain Valiant that he was going to be her instrument of justice. She said that during his time "under the influence", she had placed several post-hypnotic suggestions in his mind that would force him to go after the villains responsible for making her obese and ruining her career. The Captain's first response was to threaten to tear her head off (he downplays his threat somewhat while relating his tale to the heroes), but he immediately got violently sick after he did so—which De Lynn told him was part of the "treatment" he'd received. Angelica informed him that she expected this effect was permanent. In case it wasn't, the entire episode had been taped, and that if he ever harmed her—or if any harm befell her that he was even *suspected* of being connected to, copies would be sent to every tabloid magazine and TV show in the country—before going on the internet. Captain Valiant wouldn't have cared about an ordinary sex tape being released—he was a real man, after all—but if footage of him groveling at the feet of a leather-clad, quarter ton heifer surfaced, he would be a laughingstock.

Since then, Angelica has contacted the Captain several times by phone, each time giving him the name and location of a target. Only one of the villains he's taken apart so far was actually connected to De Lynn, so his guess is that the others were trial runs to make sure the programming held, or maybe just included to keep the police from figuring out a pattern. Whatever. What's important is that Captain Valiant is no one's puppet, least of all one of some washed-up, Hollywood liberal with a major league weight problem.

Captain Valiant did some research and discovered that Angelica De Lynn must have gotten her hands on a drug called "Diabolique"—her uncle's pharmaceutical company used to market it as in a line of "romance-enhancing perfumes" until it was leaked that the stuff was based on the pheromones of various female demons the French government had captured over the years. Public outcry caused the product to be pulled, even though no laws were broken. The over-the-counter stuff was plenty strong, but in its' pure form, it would

be capable of affecting even him, despite the fact that he's immune to normal drugs and poisons.

The Captain's plan is to contact the PCs the next time Angelica calls him with a target; he'll tell them who and where he's supposed to hit. This will give him a blinding headache and a bout of vomiting, but he's willing to put up with that. He's counting on the heroes being able to stop him, but warns them he won't be able to hold back during the fight. If they can drive him off, great. If they knock him out and deliver him to the authorities, that's fine, too—he already has an ironclad alibi for his actions (an old enemy of his named MindBind will swear in court the Captain was acting out because of a delayed effect of mental tampering that MindBind put him years earlier). The PCs will then have to steal the antidote from Angelica or persuade her to give it to them. The Captain is sure she has the antidote on or near her person—the Diabolique drug makes the user highly aroused and suggestible too, so she would have had to have downed some of the cure right after she had her way with him, and she probably keeps some at hand in case there are any lingering side-effects. Right now, his sources tell him that Angelica is staying with her mother at the old lady's estate in Naples, Florida (or wherever the GM wants to place it). The place is well guarded and comes equipped with a state-of-the-art security system. And as far as the local police would be concerned, the PCs would be staging a robbery.

He informs that players that if they're willing to help him, he'll make it worth their while—the Captain will happily donate a handsome sum to their favorite charity, or supply them with funds for crime-fighting gear, or whatever else he can do for them. If they have any outstanding legal problems, he can help with those as well. He adds that there's also an altruistic reason for getting the antidote from Angelica—if they don't, she'll just try this thing again with another hero (or villain). If the PCs ask why Captain Valiant came to them instead of any of his friends or associates, he shrugs and tells them that “I couldn't risk the

embarrassment—but you guys don't run in the same circles.”

Should the heroes agree to the proposition, they will soon have a fight on their hands—the Captain gets another search-and-destroy assignment from Angelica that very evening. When the PCs try to stop him he will cut loose with everything he has. Getting the antidote will be no easy feat either. Whether they take it by force or stealth, they'll have to get past the mansion's gates, Lash Lightning, Angelica's security team and her mother's retinue of armed guards. Of course the biggest problem is that they're breaking the law. If the characters try to reason with Angelica, she will at first deny everything, but her attitude may soften if the heroes point out that her actions have consequences she hasn't thought about: eventually the villain community will retaliate, even if they don't know who their foe is, which means a lot of innocent people could be hurt. Also, if the villains who changed Angelica in the first place find out what she's up to, they will most definitely come after her again.

If the heroes do manage to halt the Captain's unwilling rampage and deliver the antidote (however they obtained it), the man is as good as his word, rewarding them lavishly. He does not seek vengeance against Angelica De Lynn—he knows she still has the whole incident on tape, and the satisfaction he would get from dropping her from the nearest tall building wouldn't be worth the public humiliation. In fact, from then on out, the Captain flies by from time to time just to make sure nothing bad has happened to her.

The Diabolique Formula



Emotion Control 14 (Extra: Continuous; Flaws: One emotion-love/lust. Sense Dependent [olfactory]; Linked Feats-Attractive 1, Fascinate; Linked Power-Mental Transform 14 [target becomes susceptible to wielder's suggestions]; Extra: Continuous; Flaws: Side-Effect-user is subject to ½ strength mental transform against self, Touch; 30 total pp).

Captain Valiant



PL: 13

Str: 18/38(+4/14) **Dex:** 12 (+1)
Con: 18 (+4) **Int:** 12 (+1) **Wis:** 12 (+1)
Cha: 14 (+2)
Initiative: 1/5 **Attack:** 12 **Defense:** 11
Damage: 14 **Toughness Save:** 5/15
Fortitude Save: 9 **Reflex Save:** 3
Willpower Save: 3

Skills: Bluff 7 (+9), Intimidate 10 (+12), Knowledge (civics) 5 (+6), Knowledge (current events) 6 (+7), Knowledge (popular culture) 3 (+4), Notice 5 (+6), Pilot 10 (+11), Profession (astronaut) +8).

Feats: Attractive 1, Benefit 4 (Security Clearance, Stature 2[famous/infamous super-hero, popular figure among right-wing

audiences], Wealth 2), Connected, Diehard, Endurance 1, Equipment 12 (10 points in crime-fighting gear such as handcuffs and a police scanner, 50 equipment points in HQ, the Valiant Retreat), Evasion, Fearsome Presence 5, Power Attack.

Powers: Enhanced Strength 20, Flight 6 (500 mph), Immunity (cold, disease, heat, pressure, poison, vacuum), Impervious Protection 10, Super-Senses 10 (Extended Hearing and Sight x100, Ultra-Hearing, Ultra-Vision, X-Ray Vision), Super-Strength 3 (Max Load: 40 tons; PF: Super-Breath, PF: Thunderclap).

Drawback

Weakness: Suffers cumulative -1 penalty to attack rolls, checks, and Defense after being backed down (losing Intimidation check) or realizing he's been tricked (aware that he lost a Bluff check), continues until he successfully confronts person responsible or takes steps to rectify the situation (Uncommon, Moderate, Instant): -2 points.

Background and History

Captain Valiant is one of the results of an early 1970s federal push to develop superheroes with strong ties to the U.S. government/military—and who also shared the authoritarian mind-set of the Nixon administration. In the Captain's case, he was one of a group of astronauts deliberately exposed to the same type of cosmic storm that had bequeathed powers on a quartet of adventurers in the early 1960s. Most of the volunteers for the project simply died, the victims of massive radiation poisoning, but the Captain developed powers beyond even the most optimistic expectations of the scientists involved in the project. He grew stronger and stronger as the months progressed, until he was one of the most formidable super-heroes in the nation. Captain Valiant was intended to be a new national symbol of America's might—and of the Nixon presidency. Unfortunately, the Watergate scandal put an end to that. President Ford kept him on the federal payroll for a while, but quietly de-commissioned him in 1975, severing his government sanctioned status.

This proved to be the best thing that could have happened to the Captain. In the years that followed, his rugged good looks, patriotic background, and sheer power made him extremely popular with an America eager to recover a bit of national swagger following the turmoil and defeat of the sixties and seventies. He racked up victory after victory, defeating some of the era's worst super-villains and preventing numerous natural disasters. When he single-handedly saved the Earth from the menace of the Plague Nebula, people almost came to worship him. His popularity peaked during the Reagan years, and he would have re-joined the government as an "official" hero if he hadn't been making far too much money doing corporate endorsements and speaking engagements at that point.

Recently his power levels have gone into a noticeable decline-he's still extraordinarily tough even by super-human standards, but no longer the almost invincible force of nature he once was; Captain Valiant fears this is a symptom of advancing middle age (he's past fifty now) but the truth is that his powers are linked to his confidence, which has suffered after the debacle in Baghdad and subsequent loss of popularity. Though the Captain won't admit it, he's been privately shaken by his very public failure and by all the negative publicity that followed his scandalous divorce proceedings. He's ramped up his obnoxious behavior to conceal his growing insecurities.

Note: Captain Valiant first appeared in the 1st edition sourcebook **The Bad Guys**, by PBW. He has been revised/rewritten for 2e. There is a variant version of his stats on Page 46, in the Cretin's Adventure "I Want a New Action Figure."

HEROES NEVER DIE IN BED

In March, 1971, the young hero known as Epsilon, a recent recruit into the ranks of the youthful team known as the Counter-Culture, seemingly suffered a psychotic break while fighting alongside his team against the insane technologist called the Iron Ballerina. After tearing the Iron Ballerina limb from bionic limb, Epsilon turned on his own team, slaughtering every one of them save Zephyr, who ran screaming from the carnage, and Jayhawk, who remains in a coma to this day. Multiple TV crews had been covering the battle between the Counter-Culture and their cybernetic foe, so the horrific episode was broadcast live to horrified audiences across the Midwest to terrified audiences. After briefly pausing to observe the damage he had wrought, Epsilon fled before other supers or the authorities could arrive. Despite a massive manhunt, he was not found. He was not seen again that for the next eighteen months, and many hoped that Epsilon had returned to the future era the young powerhouse had claimed to hail from.

Such hopes were in vain. Epsilon re-surfaced in September of 1973, this time in New York City. He emerged from a crowd gathered at a civil rights rally and attacked the Justice Caucus (AKA the 7 Soldiers of Equality), a Northeastern super-team composed entirely of African-Americans. The entire membership of the Justice Caucus was present (Asphalt, Commando X, Mr. Smooth, Nefertiti Stone, Noir, the Urban Knight, and Zulu Sun) as well as ally Raptor, a high-flying street fighter who served as the unofficial "8th Soldier." Formed in early 1967, the team was highly popular among the black community, but controversial with whites for their confrontational style and leftist political views. However, nearly everyone but hard-core bigots was horrified by Epsilon's brutal assault on the team, most of which was again broadcast live by media present at the rally. Epsilon launched into a merciless assault, savagely pummeling Nefertiti Stone

to a bloody pulp and hurling Asphalt's stony body against the side of a building with such force that it shattered irrevocably. The battle ended when Zulu Sun drove Epsilon down into an abandoned subway tunnel, and then expended all the energy in his solar-powered cells in a single burst, bringing down hundreds of tons of rubble down on both of them. The bodies were never recovered, but neither Epsilon nor Zulu Sun was ever seen again. Nefertiti Stone-who had previously suffered serious injury at the hands of Kid Righteous (see Professor Purgatory's back-story)-was left paralyzed from the waist down, while Mr. Smooth lost an eye in the attack. Their membership devastated, the Justice Caucus disbanded soon afterward. Some continued on in their heroic careers, but none have been seen for many years.

The player characters are introduced to this sad bit of history when they hear breaking news about an ongoing super-battle in the downtown area; reports describe the combatants as a young, brown-haired white man in a white and blue costume and an older black man in civilian clothes. The battle has already resulted in numerous casualties, though as yet no fatalities. Police are requesting aid from any available super-heroes in the area. The heroes should need no further invitation.

When the heroes arrive, they find a battered, bloody man lying in a shallow crater in the street, in the middle of a devastated city block. The man is barely clinging to consciousness, but still manages to stagger to his feet. In a hoarse whisper, he says "Epsilon... ..Epsilon will go after the others...take this... ..code is...52365...at Safe-World...come see me...later." He reaches inside his jacket pocket and presses a key into the hand of the nearest PC. Overwhelmed by the pain of his injuries, the man then loses passes out and collapses to the ground. Emergency personnel arrive seconds, and the man is rushed to the nearest hospital while police secure the area.

It shouldn't be difficult for the heroes to figure out that the key and numeric code the man gave them pertain to a safe deposit box or storage unit; checking

the yellow pages reveals that there is a self-storage facility named Safe-World not far from the scene. The key is marked 52-and there is indeed a unit #52 on the site. Inside the unit the heroes find a few unusual belongings-a red-, black-, and yellow-costume that resembles military garb, a few vintage weapons, and some assorted electronic gear (nothing that looks too advanced or cutting edge). There are also more conventional personal effects inside-along with a leather bound journal. The costume and contents of the journal reveal the man to be Elijah Al-Alim-the former Commando X.

If the heroes follow-up with a visit to the hospital the next day, they are informed that Mr. Alim's condition has stabilized enough for him to speak. Though his condition is still listed as serious, his recuperative abilities are remarkable. Four police officers are posted outside his room, but given the circumstances they are willing to let the heroes speak with him-the man has begged to speak with the heroes ever since he got out of surgery and refuses to speak with police; perhaps the heroes can get useful info out of him. (Note: if the heroes aren't on good terms with the law, have Commando X escape his hospital room and track the PCs down, despite his injuries).

The man confirms to the PCs that he is indeed Commando X, though he hasn't worn his costume or used the name Elijah Al-Alim in quite some time, living instead under the alias William Xavier Samuels. He relates the story of the Justice Caucus' demise for them if they aren't familiar with the story- then proceeds to tell them that Epsilon was the one who attacked him the previous day. Epsilon survived being buried underground a quarter-century ago and has returned to finish the fight he started. He would have killed Elijah but he seemed to sense the heroes approach, and apparently wasn't prepared to face them then and there. But now he'll go after the others-and none of them could last more than a few seconds against him. He implores the heroes to stop Epsilon from murdering his friends.

Elijah kept in touch with the rest of the team, and proceeds to fill the PCs in on their real identities and locations. The Urban Knight's real name is Duncan Dodds; he and Camille Vance-Noir-married shortly after the Justice Caucus broke up, and they currently live in a high-rise apartment in Manhattan. Duncan sold his industrial design firm two years ago and retired, while Camille runs an art gallery. Trey (Raptor) English is a municipal bus driver for a working class section of Detroit, where he lives with his second wife and two adolescent sons. Nefertiti Stone resides in a Baltimore housing project with her older sister and her great-niece; she works as a part-time alcohol/drug counselor and receives partial disability payments. All of the surviving Justice Caucus members are now in late middle age or older-the youngest (Noir) is 57. Duncan Dodds hasn't worn the Urban Knight armor in two decades, and he's too fat now to fit into it even if he tried; his wife Noir's powers gradually faded with time, leaving her a moderately athletic woman; Nefertiti Stone is still in a wheelchair; and Trey (Raptor) English hasn't seen action in fifteen years, though he's still in great shape. They have no hope against Epsilon without super-powered help.

Elijah understands the PCs have no way of knowing which target Epsilon will go after first, but he has a solution. Mr. Smooth never gave up the hope that Zulu Sun had lived through the collapse of the subway tunnel-and had built a device that could detect the solar-charged hero's unique energy signature. During their fight, Elijah realized that Epsilon was glowing with the same solar energy aura that Commando X's comrade used to have, almost as if he had stolen it. He describes the tracking unit as one of the devices the PCs found in storage and shows them how to use to track Epsilon. If they ask about Mr. Smooth's whereabouts, Elijah answers that he died in 1992 of natural causes (actually, he died of AIDS).

What no one ever discovered was that Epsilon was not a time-traveling teenage superhuman at all, but a sophisticated experimental android created

by Operation S. The Nixon administration was extremely concerned about the activities of anti-government super-beings. The President charged Operation S with creating super-heroes who would share the values of the administration. One of their successes along those lines was Captain Valiant; another was the Epsilon android. Epsilon was equipped with programmed with false memories and a sophisticated set of behavior protocols. It's mission was to infiltrate the ranks of the liberal super-hero community, posing as one of them. It was then to compile information on possible threats and take any necessary action. After several public acts of heroism, the android was accepted into the Counter-Culture. Initially Epsilon performed admirably, but its' positronic brain was damaged during the battle with Cyber-Dancer triggering its' "Extreme Sanction" mode against perceived threats. This is what led to the attacks against the Counter-Culture and Justice Caucus.

The collapse of the subway tunnel hurt Epsilon so badly that the android's self-repair mechanisms took years to mend the damage, but eventually the android re-activated and dug itself out of the rubble. Since then, Epsilon has indeed set about finishing the task it was engaged in before its' entombment-eradicating the Justice Caucus. The android's internal clock is damaged and it does not comprehend how much time has passed since it was last active; it is slowly learning about the modern world while hunting down the remaining Caucus members-which has fortunately slowed down the progress of this mission. The confusion the android suffered led it to attempt phone contact with Operation S—an action that triggered an automatic alert code in Dr. Noble's PDI office. Nathalia Noble never believed Epsilon had been destroyed, and set up a system to alert her if the android did resurface. Now that she has confirmed that Epsilon still exists, she is determined to take the android into custody and prevent a sordid secret from her agency's past from being revealed.

Dr. Noble is personally leading a PDI strike team to either capture or completely

destroy the Operation S creation before anyone can discover the truth behind Epsilon. She has a tracking system that allows her to locate the android, just as the PCs do. Despite her age she has suited up in PDI combat armor and is toting more than one formidable weapon-she is ready for action. Assuming he is currently battle-ready, her nephew Eric Noble may be accompanying her on the strike team too.

To bolster her chances of success, Dr. Noble has secured the release of several super-villains that were being held in federal custody. Nathalia has promised them their parole should they make a meaningful contribution to the missions' success. To ensure their loyalty, Dr. Noble has implanted cybernetic devices in the bases of their necks capable of incapacitating or killing them if they get out of line. Dr. Noble is willing to go to great lengths to protect PDI's reputation-if the PCs get too close, she will give her pet villains reign to attack the heroes or even threaten civilians to slow the PCs down, though she will not tolerate lethal force being employed against bystanders or local law enforcement.

Epsilon

PL: 13

Str: 10/35 (+0/13) **Dex:** 10 (+0)

Con: - **Int:** 10(+0) **Wis:** 10(+0)

Cha: 10(+0)

Initiative: 0 **Attack:** 9 **Defense:** 9

Damage: 13 **Toughness Save:** 0/10

Fortitude Save: n/a **Reflex Save:** 0

Willpower Save: 0

Skills: None

Feats: Eidetic Memory, Diehard, Jack-of-Trades, Quick Change 2

Powers: Immunity 30 (all Fortitude effects), Mimic 18 (All traits at once; Extras: Continuous, Extra Subjects [5], Perception, Stacking; Flaws: Overload, Tainted), Mind Shield 10

Epsilon is currently mimicking the following powers: Cosmic Energy Control 13 (AP: Blast; Extra: Aura; Flaw: Touch; AP: Dazzle [visual]), Enhanced Strength 20, Enhanced Feats: Defensive Attack, Elusive Target, Improved Aim, Improved Initiative, Move-By Action, and Take-Down Attack, Force Field

10, Mind Reading 10 [Flaw: Limited-surface thoughts], Speed 5 [250 mph], Super-Movement (Air Walking, Permeate).

Drawback: As long as Epsilon is mimicking Zulu Sun's Cosmic Energy Control and Enhanced Strength, he suffers from the drawback: Weakness (cumulative -1 on all attack rolls, checks, and Defense every 5 minutes when in darkness or deep shadow; Common, Moderate; -4 points)

Background: As described above, Epsilon was created to infiltrate and monitor super-heroes suspected of subversive activities. He is unaware of his true origins and believes that he is actually an ultra-human freedom fighter from the 41st century, dispatched to the past in an attempt to prevent the totalitarian Communist government that rules his time period from ever coming to power. He is convinced that he must complete his mission and eliminate his targets to save the future. He cannot be dissuaded from this belief-he is acting out his programming, but heroes whose powers allow them to control machines could conceivably reprogram him, if they can get past his mental shields.

Epsilon looks like the All-American boy—a well built, boyishly handsome twenty year old with blue eyes and a mop of thick brown hair. He wears a form-fitting silver jumpsuit with blue gloves and boots, a red belt, and the Greek letter epsilon emblazoned on the chest inside a red circle. He never seems to stop smiling. Epsilon is no longer capable of repairing cosmetic damage to his outer shell (though he recovers normally otherwise) so prolonged combat will reveal the steel-alloy endoskeleton and polymer musculature beneath his artificial skin.

Average PDI Agent

PL: 5

Str: 10 (+0) **Dex:** 13 (+2) **Con:** 10

Int: 13 (+2) **Wis:** 13 (+2) **Cha:** 10(+0)

Initiative: 2 **Attack:** 5 **Defense:** 5

Damage: 5

Toughness Save: 0/10 (in armor)

Fortitude Save: n/a **Reflexes Save:** 0

Willpower Save: 10

Skills: Bluff 6 (+6), Computers 4 (+6), Disable Device 6 (+8), Investigate 4 (+6), Knowledge (civics) 4 (+6), Knowledge (physical sciences) 2 (+4), Notice 8 (+10), Stealth 8 (+10)

Feats: Chokehold, Distract, Equipment 7, Grappling Finesse, Improved Pin, Set-Up, Sneak Attack, Taunt, Team-Work

Equipment: Blaster Pistol (Blast 5), 'Flex-Suit' body armor (Protection 5), Taser (Stun 5), 8 pts in additional equipment as needed.

Elijah Al-Alim, the ex-Commando X

PL: 8

Str: 17 (+3) **Dex:** 21 (+5) **Con:** 19 (+4)

Int: 13 (+1) **Wis:** 17 (+3) **Cha:** 16 (+3)

Initiative: 5 **Attack:** 8

Defense: 8/6 (flat-footed) **Damage:** 8

Toughness Save: 10 **Fortitude Save:** 9

Reflex Save: 5 **Will Save:** 5

Skills: Acrobatics 5 (+10), Diplomacy 5 (+8), Knowledge (history) 4 (+5), Knowledge (tactics) 4 (+5), Language 3 (French, German, and Russian), Notice 8 (+11), Sense Motive 8 (+11), Stealth 8 (+13)

Feats: Defensive Attack, Diehard, Dodge Focus 2, Grappling Finesse, Improved Throw, Improved Trip, Instant Up, Move-by Action, Prone Fighting, Uncanny Dodge

Powers: Leaping 2 (65 foot running long jump, 16 foot high jump), Regeneration 5 (roll to recover from being disabled 1/hr, +3 to roll), Speed 2 (20 mph), Strike 4 (Extra: Penetrating; PF: Mighty), Super-Senses (Accurate [auditory], Danger Sense [auditory], Ultra-hearing)

Background: Marcus Lincoln Littlejohn was a participant in the U.S. Army's oldest super-soldier experiments, and one of the few successes. His activities during WW II and the Korean conflict were downplayed at

the time because of the racial situation of the United States of that era. He became involved in the civil rights movement in the late 1950s, converting to the Nation of Islam in 1969 and changing his name to Elijah Al-Alim. He remained active after the break-up of the Righteous Caucus but retired by the mid-eighties when his abilities started to fade. Elijah is now all of 94 years of age, though he appears to be no older than his mid-sixties and still retains much of his fighting prowess and a degree of his superhuman vigor. He carries 190 well-muscled pounds on a 5'11" frame. He shaves his head, but his face is framed by a neat salt and pepper beard.

If the PCs get a chance to interact further with Elijah, they will find him to be a straight-forward, plain-spoken man whose precise manners and chivalrous attitude toward women mark him as a man who came of age in a different era. Perhaps understandably given his personal history, Elijah is more comfortable around blacks than whites, but he is no anti-white bigot. He learned long ago not to judge others by the color of their skin. He broke with the Black Muslims years ago and converted to a more traditional branch of Islam (though many might deem this no improvement). However, he is given to believing all sorts of wild conspiracy theories involving the federal government, everything from the CIA assassinating President Kennedy to AIDS being created as a bio-weapon against African-Americans to the Bush Administration having foreknowledge of 9/11.

He is justifiably proud of what he helped accomplish during the Civil Rights movement, but saddened by the multiple social ills that plague the African-American urban poor.

CHEATING THE DEVIL

Mr. Chiang receives word from his sources in the Underworld that the Arch-Fiend he once got the better of in a long-ago deal has finally decided to exact retribution against him. More than familiar with the ways of Hell, Mr. Chiang knows there will be no direct action taken against him—that would be considered unseemly (and bad for future business—all those who sign contracts with fiends need to *think* they can emerge unscathed from the deal) but that his friends and associates will be targeted instead.

The master manipulator hatches a subtle scheme. He arranges to be present at the scene of a bank robbery, kidnapping, or other such petty criminal endeavor, posing as just another hapless victim. He is well aware that the PCs are in the area and will undoubtedly respond, "rescuing" him along with the other civilians caught up in the incident. After they do so, Mr. Chiang introduces himself as a "humble businessman of some small influence" and promises to do all he can to repay the heroes. His first act is to make a generous donation to the cause of their choice.

In the days and weeks that follow, the player characters seem to enjoy unusual good fortune in their personal and professional lives, as do their family members and friends. New, better paying assignments, unexpected bonuses, notices from the IRS that they overpaid their taxes and are owed additional refunds, frequently coming across a broken meter and scoring free parking when then go shopping downtown.

Things turn sour quickly, however, as malicious accidents begin to afflict those close to the PCs. At first these appear to be simple bad luck, but soon it becomes apparent these are malicious pranks—which rapidly escalate into serious mischief. Co-workers, friends, and loved ones start getting injured, a couple seriously so (The GM should exercise a little discretion here depending on how attached a player is to a

given NPC and how much it will affect the hero).

Hell has dispatched the feared enforcer known as Prof. Moloch to take several pounds of flesh (literally) from those Mr. Chiang cares about (or in the case of the heroes, *appears* to care about). The Professor is brilliant, but not terribly suited for subtle work, so he is accompanied in his mission by his familiar (sidekick), an imp with the appellation Stink-Wortle. Stink-Wortle was responsible for the initial acts of mischief that befell the character's friends and family, before the Prof took over the heavy lifting.

The PCs will undoubtedly begin to see a pattern in the unfortunate events afflicting those close to them and begin to investigate. They may assume an old foe has uncovered their secret ids and is going after them in a particularly sadistic fashion. The GM should allow them to chase down such fruitless leads for a while before they uncover the more chilling truth (perhaps via a few clues supplied courtesy of Mr. Chiang).

Eventually Doctor Moloch will get around to confronting the heroes face-to-face, even if the PCs haven't yet discovered the Hand of Hell in this matter. Dr. Moloch will courteously explain that he has no particular grudge against them, but that he is bound to destroy them out of loyalty to the bureaucracy of Hell. This is nothing personal, he assures them, but only meant to teach their "benefactor" that there are always consequences to swindling a Prince of Hades. It is his sad duty to wipe out the heroes and all their loved ones. There is a whole list of tedious and repulsive violations he must perform upon them first, so in the interest of saving time he would appreciate it if they'd line up and let him get started.

I think we can safely assume that they do not in fact line up to be violated, and instead try to clobber him. If the heroes defeat Dr. Moloch (capturing or "killing" him), the infernal enforcer will consider the matter closed and the debt of honor settled, whereupon he returns to the Underworld until such time as he is called again. If Moloch and his familiar are on the verge of overcoming the PCs, Mr. Chiang

will appear with just the right weapon, incantation, or bit of information needed to turn the tide of battle. He will then inform the PCs that he considers all debts settled, and wishes them well before vanishing into the shadows.

Dr. Moloch, PhD



PL: 13

Str: 33 (11) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 18 (+4)
Int: 18 (+4) **Wis:** 18 (+4) **Cha:** 16 (+3)
Initiative: 4 **Attack Bonus:** 14
Defense: 13 **Damage:** 11
Toughness Save: 13 **Fortitude Save:** 4
Reflexes Save: 4 **Willpower Save:** 4

Skills: Diplomacy 5 (+8), Gather Information 4 (+7), Knowledge (arcane lore) 11 (+15), Knowledge (history) 8 (+11), Knowledge (behavioral sciences) 8 (+12), Notice 4 (+8), Sense Motive 8 (+12).

Feats: Chokehold, Contacts (supernatural underworld), Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Favored Opponent 3 (angels, celestial avatars, agents of divine goodness), Fearsome Presence, Ritualist, Sidekick 23 (Stink-Wortle)

Powers: Comprehend 1(all human/humanoid languages), Immunity (Aging, Life Support), Impervious Protection 9, Mental Shield 9, Super-Strength 4 (max load 40 tons; Extra: Thunderclap), Regeneration 5 (+4 Recovery checks, Resurrection-if slain Prof. Moloch can choose to return to the mortal world in one week's time; can be slain permanently by angels, celestial avatars, or agents of divine goodness), Super-Senses 2 (Darkvision)

Drawbacks: Disability (cannot enter holy/consecrated places; uncommon, moderate, -2 pts), Weakness (Dazed for one round by holy symbols within 10' when presented by true believers; Common, Moderate, -3 pts)

Background and History

Lord of the Third Infernal Legion, Plangent Wrecker of Obscenities on the Heads of the Lost and the Damned, and Professor Emeritus of Depraved Studies at the Burning College of the 34th Hell; for the living incarnation of absolute evil he's not really such a bad guy. Certainly he intends to wreak wondrous and unthinkable abominations upon Mankind, but it's really just a job to him. The truth is that he's deeply bored with Evil. He is unimpressed with bloody sacrifices and demented acts of worshipful carnage. Unspeakable perversities make him roll his eyes—he's seen it all before. Any idiot can slaughter children over a bowl as far as he's concerned.

In person he is pleasant and congenial. He will greet the players warmly if he's met them before, ask about the health of mutual acquaintances and how things are going in their own lives before he gets down to the business of killing them.

Dr. Moloch is usually more formidable than the above stats indicate, but recent over-use of the summoning ritual that brings him into the world of man [the incantation was printed on a web site] has left him weary in body and spirit. Now any cheapjack magician with a web-browser and a set of black candles can yank him up out of Hell and force him to run their shabby errands. He is forever having to miss Planning Committee sessions and seminars in Advanced Evil and waste his time kicking in bank vault doors and fighting superheroes hand to hand. He's not really sure what to do about it, although he supposes that human civilization will fall eventually.

Stink-Wortle the Imp



PL: 9

Str: 4 (-3) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 14 (+2) **Wis:** 16 (+3) **Cha:** 6 (-2)
Initiative: 4 **Attack:** 7 **Defense:** 7
Damage: -3 **Toughness Save:** 3
Fortitude Save: 3 **Reflexes Save:** 4
Willpower Save: 3

Skills: Bluff 10 (+8), Knowledge (arcane lore) 3 (+5), Knowledge (pop culture) 3 (+5), Stealth 4 (+8)

Feats: Distract, Set-Up, Taunt

Powers: Comprehend (all human/humanoid languages), Concealment 2 (normal sight), Flight 2, Immunity 10 (Aging, Life Support), Magic 11 (Mental Transform 11 [curse an individual to act out any one of the 7 deadly sins (envy, gluttony, greed, pride, sloth, vanity, wrathfulness)]); Alternate Power: Nauseate 11 [stinking vapors]; Extra: Area effect-radius; Flaw: Sicken; AP: Paralyze 11 [painful boils form on target's skin]; Alternate Power: Sonic Control [unholy screech]; Power Feats: Subtle, Trigger 2), Shrinking 4 (Extra: Continuous; Flaw: Permanent), Regeneration 3 (+2 Recovery checks, Resurrection—if slain Stink-Wortle can choose to return to the mortal world in one week's time; can be slain permanently by

angels, celestial avatars, or agents of divine goodness), Super-Senses 2 (Dark Vision).

Drawbacks: Disability (cannot enter holy/consecrated places; uncommon, moderate, -2 pts), Weakness (Dazed for one round by holy symbols within 10' when presented by true believers; Common, Moderate, -3 pts)

Background and History

During his mortal life, Stink-Wortle was a hotshot young Hollywood producer named Peter Drake, who thought nothing of churning out films that shamelessly debased American culture. While he defended his work in the name of "artistic expression" and "freedom of speech", all he really cared about was fame and wealth. A believer in nothing beyond the material world, he thought little of having a dark sorcerer on payroll to ensure the success of his movies. He was genuinely surprised when he ended up in Hades after a sudden heart-attack. But Drake was so evil, so utterly selfish and corrupt, that the lords of darkness were actually impressed by him and decided that they wanted him on the team.

After a suitable period of torture, Peter was remade into a puny, pot-bellied winged fiend who permanently reeked of B.O.; He was then given the thoroughly humiliating appellation of Stink-Wortle. The nasty little imp was then assigned to serve Dr. Moloch for the next millennium, which he does with the maximum amount of complaint and ill-humor (not that being an imp is the worst gig he's ever had—it's just the way he approaches every job he's ever done).

Stink-Wortle dresses like a ludicrous caricature of a rap artist, although his wardrobe is at least ten years out of date. He's a bitter, spiteful creature whose sole enjoyment now comes in making others' lives miserable. But of course he was always like that.

Scrivener-Demon (minion)



Background: The Scriveners are not native creatures of Hell, but instead wayward extra-dimensional travelers whom Dr. Moloch captured and pressed into service. Their transformation attack allows them to inscribe a target's flesh with arcane patterns. An affected character can then be subjected to the effect of any power with a cost of 2 pp or fewer per rank, at the Scrivener's discretion.

PL: 8

Str: 18 (+4) **Dex:** 18 (+4) **Con:** 16 (+3)
Int: 12 (+1) **Wis:** 14 (+2) **Cha:** 10 (+0)
Initiative: 4 **Attack Bonus:** 6 **Defense:** 10
Damage: 8 (Talons) **Toughness Save:** 6
Fortitude Save: 3 **Reflexes Save:** 4
Willpower Save: 2

Skills: Craft (artistic) 8 (+9), Climb 6 (+10), Diplomacy 2 (+3), Knowledge (arcane lore) 2 (+3), Knowledge (civics) 8 (+9), Stealth 4 (+8).

Feats: Ambidexterity, Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Improved Grapple, Weapon Bind.

Powers: Comprehend 2(all human/humanoid languages), Elongation 1, Extra Limbs 2 (two additional arms), Immunity 2 (aging, disease), Strike +4 (Power Feat: Mighty), Super-Senses 2 (Dark Vision), Transformation 10 (Inscribe Flesh; Power Feat: Affect Insubstantial; Flaw: Touch).

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